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MARCH 1987

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PLAY·METER

MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE COIN-OPERATED ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY

VOL. 13, NO. 3 | CONTENTS | MARCH, 1987

FEATURES

C-Stores: The Second Pass **38**

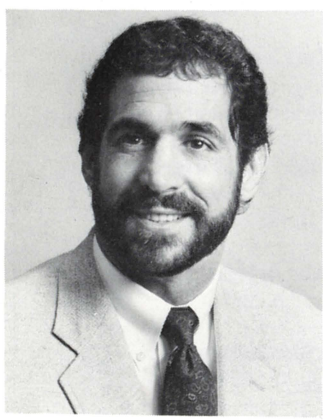
There were over 66,000 convenience stores in the United States with industry sales at $61.6 billion in 1985. Coin-operated amusement machines had played an important role in many of these locations during the video boom, but do they still? How do convenience store owners feel about the games portion of their businesses? And how to operators and manufacturers perceive the convenience store industry? This article examines those question while looking at how the coin-op amusement business fits into the convenience store industry.

Coinman Interview: Nintendo's Frank Ballouz **62**

Frank Ballouz has been in the coin-operated entertainment business 13 years and is well-known by manufacturers, distributors, and operators. He places the operator high on his list of priorities because, as he says, they are the ones the manufacturers need to listen to to be able to put out viable product. Read Frank's opinions on the industry then, now, and in the future in this interview.

Now that you're in New Orleans **70**

Welcome to New Orleans, if you've made it to ACME. If you are reading this in your office, we're truly sorry you couldn't make it but you can enjoy reading about some of the exciting things to do and see in New Orleans--it is a city that has no equal. Following this story is a list of unique places to go and we've added three recipes of typical New Orleans food you can try at home. Lesse Bontempe Rolle! (Let the good times roll.)



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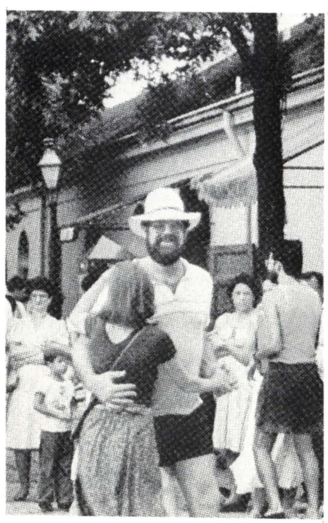

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Cover photo by Capcom. Counter-clockwise from lower left are George Nakayama, Aldo Donnaloia, Bill Cravens, and Kenzo Tsujimoto. (see cover story on page 10)

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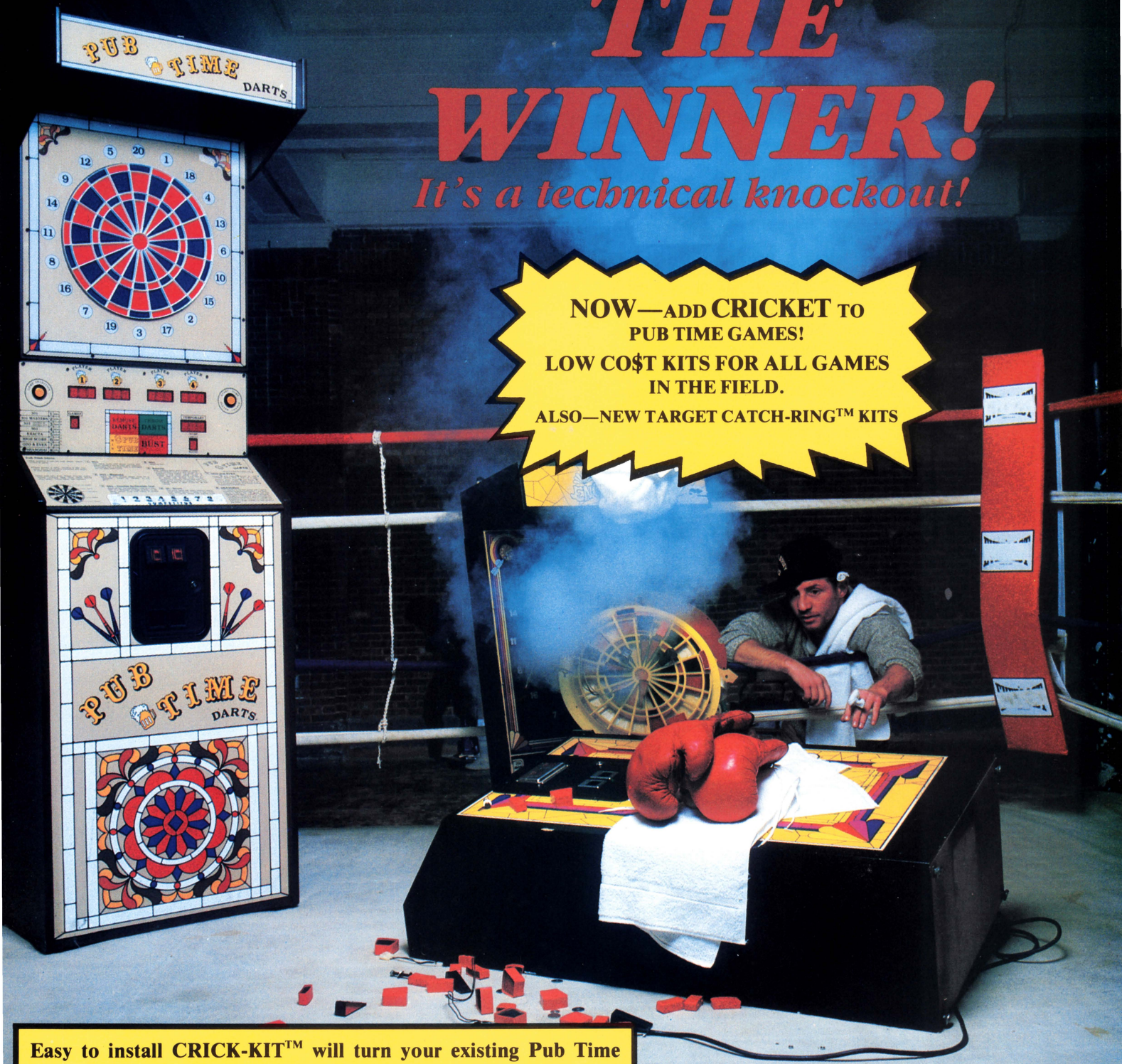

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FROM THE EDITOR

TECHNOLOGY, OUR MAP TO THE FUTURE

The open society, the unrestricted access to knowledge, the unplanned and uninhibited association of men for its furtherance--these are what may make a vast, complex, ever growing ever changing ever more specialized and expert technological world, nevertheless a world of human community.
--J. Robert Oppenheimer--

When Orville and Wilber escaped the boundaries of imagination and did what no one thought possible, the idea of man flying became stark reality instead of frivolous speculation. When man broke the sound barrier with unbelievable speeds, space flight was in the realm of possibility. The day the first horse went into cardiac arrest at the sight and sound of early automobiles, man's future of automobile transportation had begun.

We now take it all for granted. Meetings held at the other side of the country are not only possible commonplace thanks to the Wright Brothers; a man on the moon is no longer the exclusive subject for science fiction writers, thanks to man's perseverance in the face of impossibility; and cars...well, what would we do without them! All because someone faced the impossible with a gleam in their eye and an idea in their mind and combined it with available technology.

The coin-op industry is certainly no different. The industry began with simple machines, pinballs based on pure luck. A game designer named Harry Mabs working for D. Gottlieb & Company invented flippers in 1947 for a game called *Humpty Dumpty.* Pinballs, for this reason, are sometimes referred to as flipper games. Technology continued to influence flipper games as electro-mechanical games were replaced by "new-technology" solid state games in the 70s.

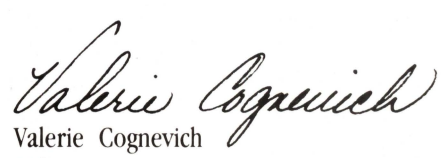
During that decade another technological advance was being conceived by an man named Nolan Bushnell. He utilized a relatively new technology and placed simple action on a black and white monitor and gave us *Pong.* He broke the barriers of what could and what could not be done. His technological breakthrough changed the coin-op industry more drastically than anything ever had before.

Kids today are sometimes referred to as living in the computer generation. Computers are an advanced technology in itself, and yet, like cars and airplanes, they are pretty much taken for granted. The possibilities of these complex machines boggle the imagination. An IBM representative once told us that a computer could do in five minutes what it would take over 20 employees to do in a work week! And this technology is at the core of our coin-op entertainment industry. The technological possibilities are limitless but are limited only through the human imagination.

When man's imagination lets loose and combines with the latest technologies, the games born of that marriage will boggle our minds. Just look how laser technology was put to use. Although it didn't do what we had hoped for the industry, its applications were amazing, the games extraordinary. The technology goes far beyond what the coin-op industry saw or may see for a long time. But that technology is being refined and we may see it reappear some day more spectacular than we can picture even in our wildest dreams! I'm in awe of the new home games that will allow players to interact with the TV screen by shooting images with a special gun. And it leaves me wondering where it will all end. However, I then realize that it doesn't really have to end anywhere as long as man has the unrestricted access to knowledge and the uninhibited association of men for its furtherance. That truly is what makes for a vast, complex,ever growing, ever changing, ever more specialized and expert technological world.

As you study the new games at ACME '87, you will be seeing equipment that is the latest in technological advancement; the product of man's ability to combine technology and imagination--games to spark the player's urge to become a part of modern technology.

Technology is advancing beyond man's imagination but in the future, when imagination catches up with the technology--watch out! But this is really a misnomer because when man's imagination catches up to current technology, the technology will, once again, be one step behind the soar of boundless imagination. I envision someone reading early issues of our magazine and wondering how we could have been so primitive; and I wonder what the industry will be like beyond the future we are experiencing now.



Valerie Cognevich
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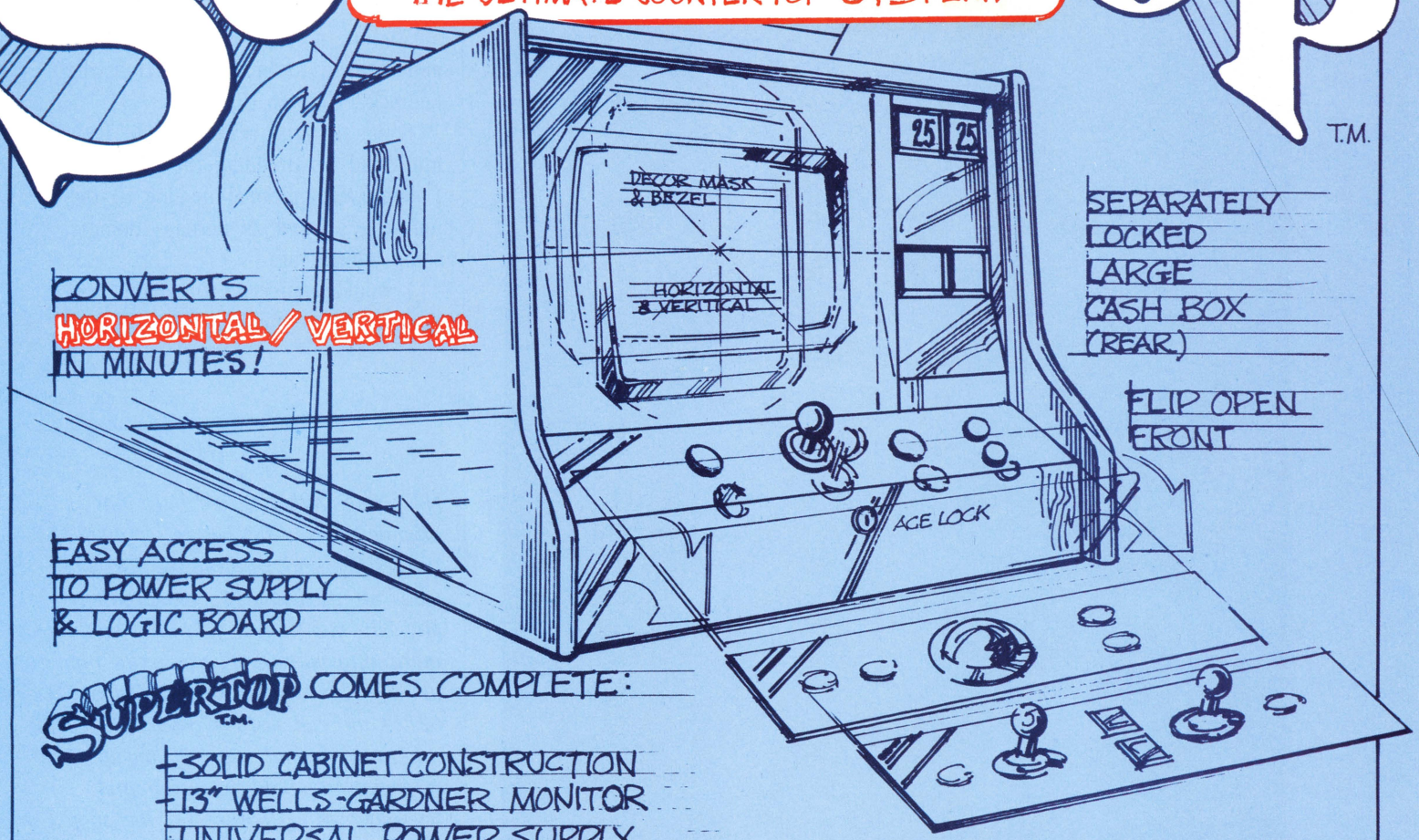

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LETTERS

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We are the producers of a trade show featuring billiards, accessories, game tables, and home recreation products for the Billiard Congress of America.

We are now planning the fourth annual expo to be held in Louisville, Kentucky, July 16-18, 1987.

Some of your readers could be interested in attending this show, and I plan a promotional mailing to the industry, as well as perhaps doing some advertising.

I would appreciate any input you think could be helpful.

Frank C. Zdy
BCA Trade Expo
San Diego, CA

[Ed. Note: Although we have not attended this expo before, it could be interesting and informative for those who are interested in the products Mr. Zdy mentioned. If you would like more information, please write him at 5838 Portobelo Ct., San Diego, CA 92124, or call (619)278-3877. We will ask him to send some follow-up information about the expo and possibly run a feature on the show.]

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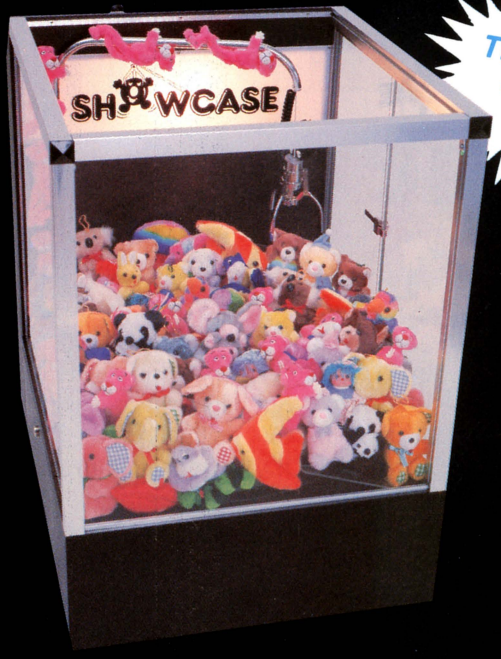

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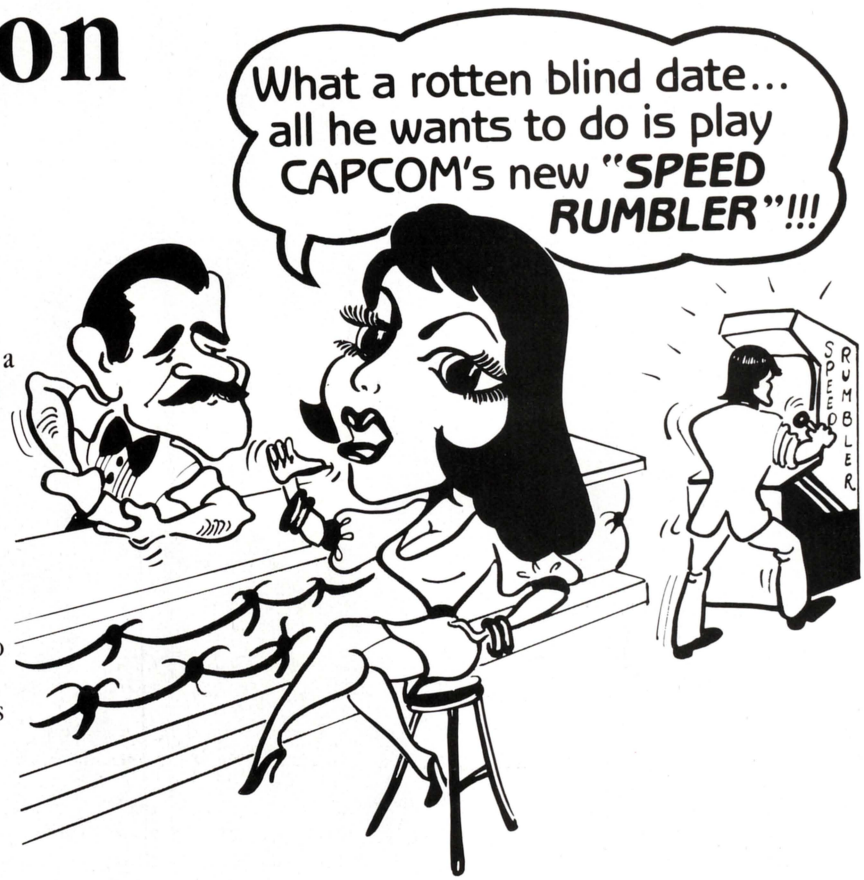
Capcom, a company on the rise



One of Capcom's Capcom Cathy ads

Capcom Company Ltd. has only been in existence since 1978 and Capcom U.S.A. a little over a year, but it truly is making a positive impact on the coin-op industry.

Capcom's founder, Mr. Kenzo Tsujimoto's first company was Irem, a large operating company in Japan with over 30,000 pieces of equipment. It began with no major contracts, and Mr. Tsujimoto was largely responsible for its growth. He sold his interest in that company because he wanted to get more involved in research and development. He started his company, Capcom, which is short for Capsulated Computers, and began work on computers.

Chairman of the board, Kenzo Tsujimoto

The company then developed and licensed some very successful amusement games such as *Commando, Ghosts N' Goblins, 1942, Gunsmoke,* and *Trojan* to Data East, Taito, Digital Controls, and Romstar.

Mr. Tsujimoto soon felt it was time to open a U.S. office with its own sales and marketing team. Its first game was *Section Z* followed by *Speed Rumbler,* which was accompanied by a unique ad campaign featuring Capcom Cathy.

Capcom U.S.A. has assembled an impressive team which includes, besides chairman of the board, Mr. Tsujimoto; George Nakayama, president; Bill Cravens, vice president of sales and marketing; and Aldo Donnaloia, western regional sales manager. All have many years of experience in the industry.

Capcom is also developing software for the Nintendo home computer system. The first three games are *Commando, 1942,* and *Ghosts N' Goblins.* Capcom has also introduced consumer games for Commodore and Apple home computers.

President George Nakayama

Donnaloia told Play Meter that Capcom is certainly a company to watch. "I don't want to exaggerate because it is hard to live up to high expectations but I truly feel that you should keep your eyes and ears open for Capcom because it's a company on the rise. We have some exciting products coming out, including *Avengers* and *Bionic Commando* which will both be shown at ACME."

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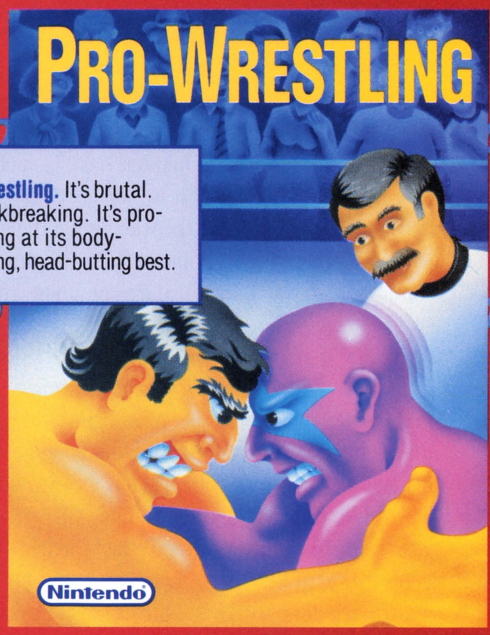

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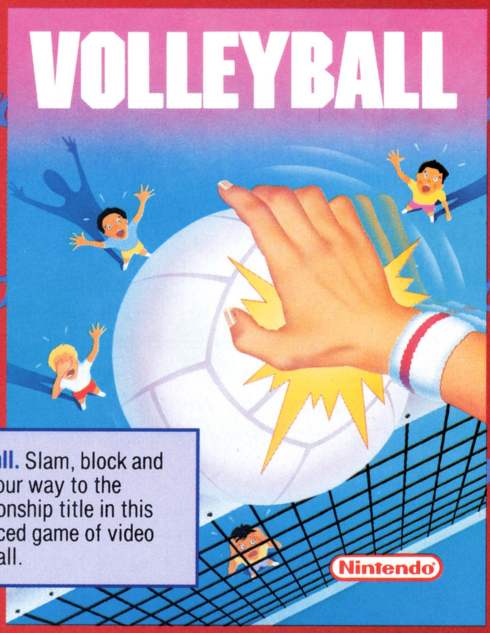

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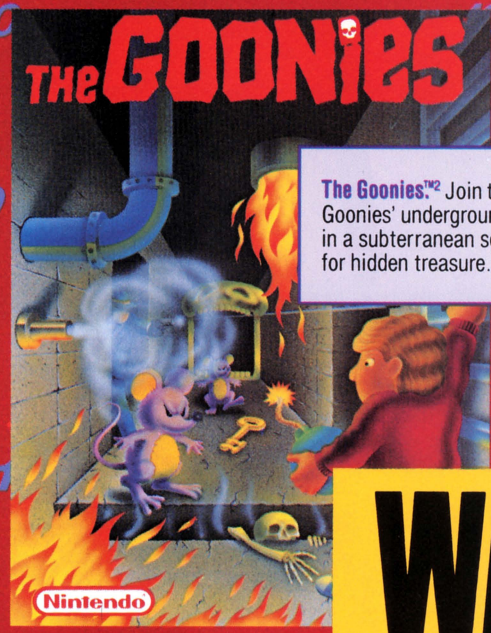

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TEN YEARS AGO

Ten years ago, Play Meter editor and publisher, Ralph Lally wrote an editorial questioning the sudden amount of publicity the industry had been receiving. "The industry has been getting a surprising amount of good publicity lately. We're pleased of course, and while we don't exactly wonder why--obviously we deserve it; in fact, it's long overdue, but we do wonder, why now?"

One factor, he cited, was the recent exploitation of the home market. Lally noted that the influx of videos and pinballs into the home market has "somehow proved to people that the machines we operate are respectable. "He likened it to a few years prior when people started buying pool tables for their homes. "They found the game wasn't sinful--it did not corrupt them or their children."

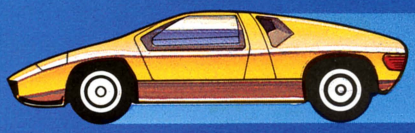
The editorial in the March 1977 issue, writing on the favorable publicity, likened the industry to an embattled child. "A child constantly embattled must turn within and find something more. He must constantly assert to himself that he has some value, that he is good. He becomes defensive. The coin industry has grown up much like the embattled child. For a long time, the industry was the victim of bad publicity, and was forced to develop a defensive attitude." The editorial went on to say that it was about time that the media was beginning to find that our industry has a place in the entertainment world, a valuable place.

Play Meter's Coinman that month was Joe Isaacson of New Orleans Novelty. He began as a technician with New Orleans Novelty and had been there nearly half a century then and, by the way, is still there today. Isaacson spoke of the new reliability of solid state pinballs as compared to electro-mechanical.

Don Osborne

Games in the news 10 years ago included, *280ZZZAP,* Checkmate, and *Freedom,* two videos and a pin by Bally; Williams' *Grand Prix*; and *Solar City* from D. Gottlieb & Co.

Valley Manufacturing & Sales had merged with Valley Cues to become The Valley Company. Alan Shafer, controller of Valley Manufacturing was promoted to vice president, finance and administration; and Dick Shelton was promoted to vice president of manufacturing (both are still with The Valley Company). Don Osborne was named western regional sales manager at Atari (he died of a heart attack three years ago.)



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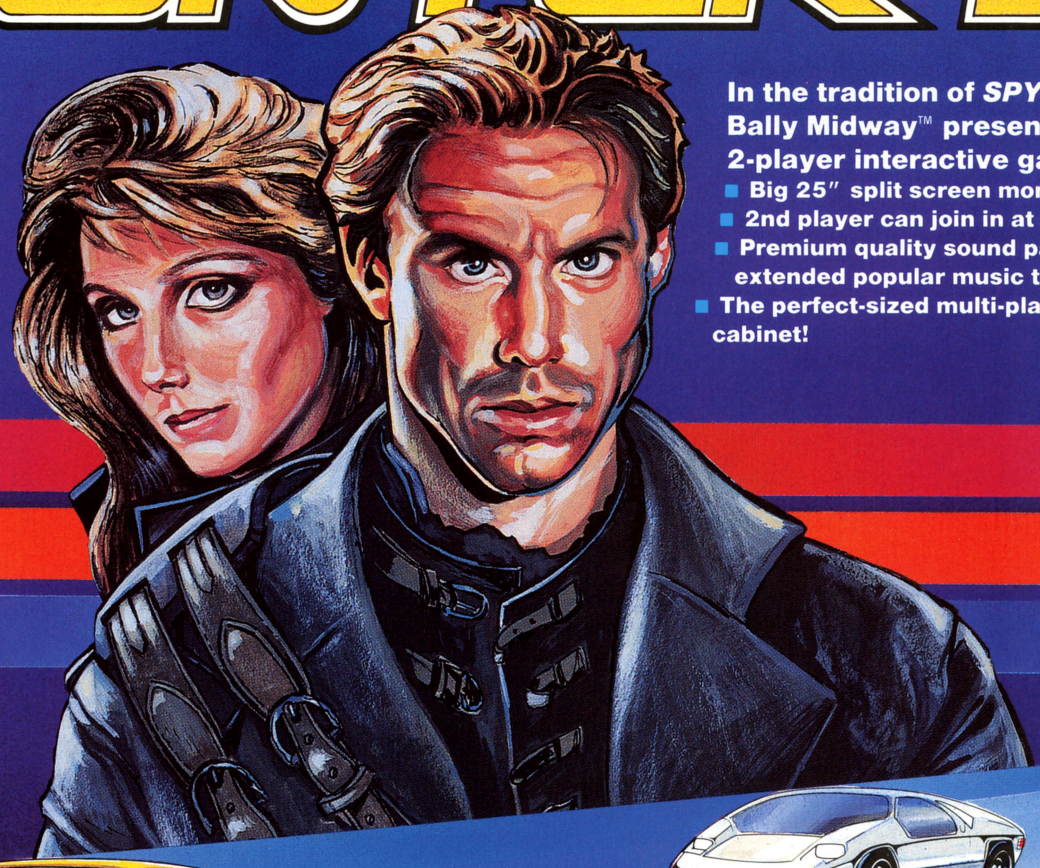

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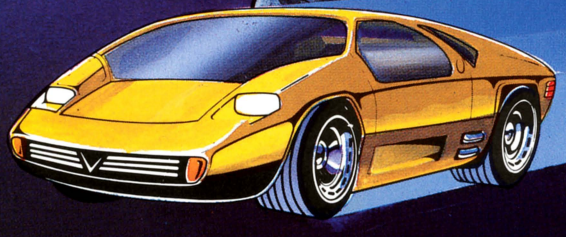

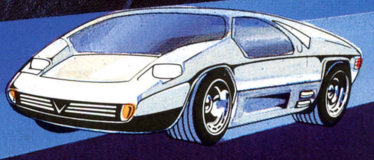

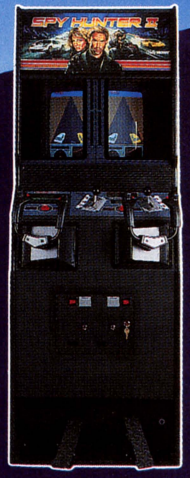

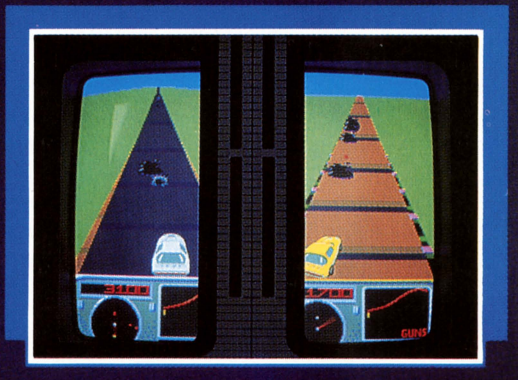

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NEWS BREAK

Michael Stroll

Stroll becomes Sega president

Michael Stroll has been named president of a new holding company formed by Sega Enterprises. He will be responsible for the company's three divisions (coin-op, arcade and consumer) and be the link between Sega USA and Sega Japan. He will be headquartered in the San Francisco consumer office.

Stroll's name is a familiar one in the industry. Even though he has not been an active member for two years, he has been present at a number of industry trade shows, including the 1986 AMOA, and maintains an interest in games that dates back to his college days.

He entered the world of coin-op in 1976, joining Seeburg Corporation as vice president of corporate technology. In 1976 he was named president of Williams Electronics, then a subsidiary of Seeburg.

Stroll brought an extensive background in microprocessors to his work, having been manager of systems development and microprocessors with National Semiconductors Corporation of Santa Clara, California and director of terminal development for SWEDA International of Morristown, New Jersey. While at Seeburg he helped develop a solid state system for Williams pinball games and put together an in-house advanced development team.

Crane hotline needs more input

As interest in cranes has grown and the ranks of crane operators have swelled, two things become evident--the need for unity and education. A crane hot line, or data base, will help fill these needs, if operators and manufacturers all lend a hand.

As reported in the news section of the February issue (page 16) Bob Snyder and Associates of California established such a data base in January. The ultimate goal of the **free** computer service is to provide crane information by region, state, type of product and circumstances; plus carry a listing of all police game seizures and regulatory actions. According to Bob Snyder, president of the company, as of March 1 very little information has been forwarded.

"The crane is an entity unusual to itself," said Snyder, "different from other coin-op equipment, and deserves specialized attention." He suggests that national and state associations have a separate arm in the association to handle merchandising games.

He noted that cranes do not appear to receive priority treatment from these associations, which handle a wide variety of equipment, but cranes are receiving priority police attention, next to video poker equipment.

"State and national associations need to make an effort to look at cranes," he said. "Their members are involved with the equipment. The associations may not want to be in the middle of liability, but how can cranes be ignored? Associations can do a lot to get laws changed. By issuing guidelines and encouraging seminars with attorneys who have experience in the field, they can further a better understanding of cranes."

Considering all the facets of crane operation, and responding to increased inquiries over the past year, Snyder held a four-hour meeting in January to discuss operator frustrations and answer questions. Attending the meeting were representatives from Wedges/Ledges and Century Vending; Tom Fricke, attorney for Time-Out Amusements; the regional manager for the Time Out chain; Parke Terry, attorney from a lobbyist law firm; a representative from Bally's Aladdin's Castle and Knottsberry Farm, plus various operators from California.

Bob Snyder

"It was a brainstorming session," explained Synder, "to discuss law enforcement and problems of crane operation. There are so many crane variations, it's beyond police investigation. Law enforcement doesn't know what to look for in a crane--there are so many different models. And the police department is not set up to be an approving agency. It's job is to be a disapproving agency. You're always a better policeman for being the tough guy rather than the nice guy. If you do find an officer you can talk to, he probably won't know much about cranes."

Snyder suggests that operators and distributors who wish to operate cranes start with a list of key states they want to enter. Research then goes by area. The hot line can be beneficial in the investigation process. Snyder encourages operators and manufacturers to call or forward information in writing (verifiable information, not rumors) on crane approvals or denials and he will follow up with interviews. Call 714/595-1237.

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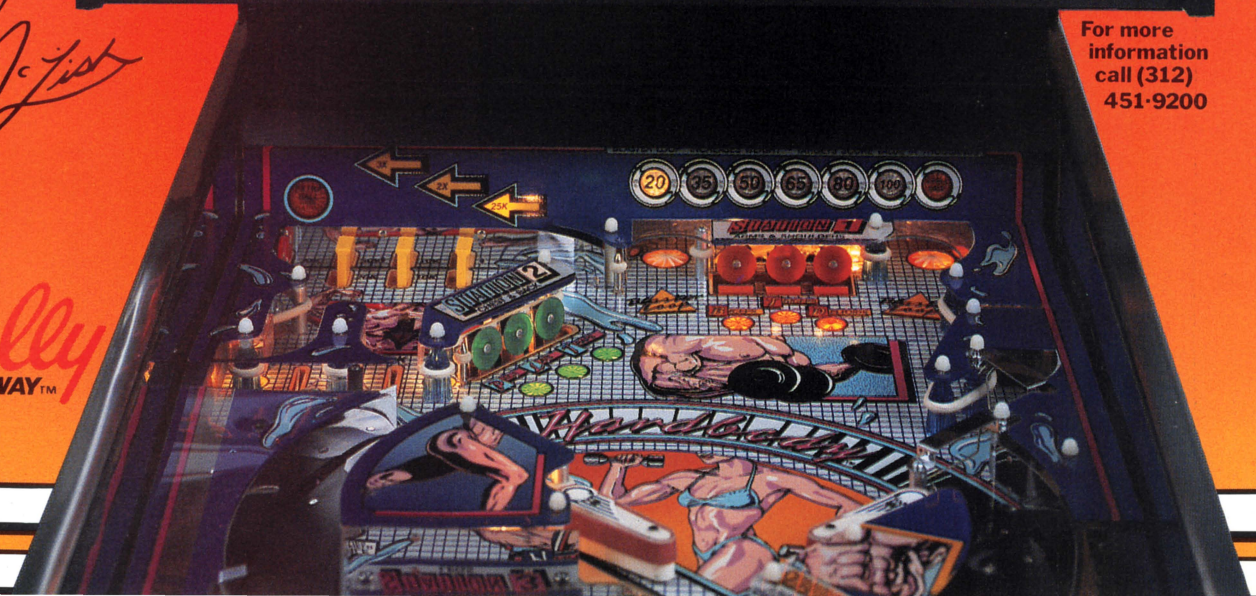

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NEWS

GUILTY PLEA IN ILLEGAL-GAMES CASE

One of four men indicted in September 1986 for violating federal copyright and trademark laws has pleaded guilty to one count of interstate transportation in aid of racketeering, according to the January 24 edition of the *Washington Post.* Joseph F. Nesline entered the guilty plea in a Washington, D.C., federal court on January 23, the newspaper reported, after the government promised not to ask for a prison sentence. According to the account, Nesline was charged with distributing 11 unlawfully manufactured and unauthorized copies of video games such as *Donkey Kong* and *Ms. Pac Man.* In a second indictment, the newspaper said, he was charged with distributing and transporting a variety of illegal video games from New Jersey to the District of Columbia.

No trial date has been set for the three men charged with Nesline.

NAMA OPPOSES CIGARETTE MACHINE RESTRICTIONS

Proposals to restrict the placement of cigarette vending machines or to ban them have resurfaced in the legislatures of several states, according to Richard W. Funk, director of government affairs of the National Automatic Merchandising Association.

In a February 10 press release, Funk said : "We are working with NAMA members, representatives of the Tobacco Institute and the tobacco companies in opposing these proposals, specifically by utilizing the OPERATION ALERT materials."

Proposals to "outlaw the placement of cigarette machines" have been introduced in Connecticut and Minnesota. A citizens' petition in Dade County, Fla., is calling for a ban on the machines. Proposals in Georgia and Maine are aimed at limiting machines to locations where minors are not allowed.

Funk, however, said that NAMA research and updated OPERATION ALERT data show cigarette machines "are not and cannot be a source for minors, because few machines are located in places where minors are admitted or would go without accompanying adults."

OHIO DISTRIBUTOR BUYS OUT DATA EAST KITS

The Game Exchange of Columbus, Ohio, has purchased all of Data East's remaining inventory of *Commando, Karate Champ, Kung Fu Master, Shootout,* and *Tag Team Wrestling* kits.

The Game Exchange's Terry Turpen said, "We are pleased to announce that we will be offering these great Data East games for the first time to operators as complete factory kits."

For more information, call the distributor toll-free at 1-800-848- 0110.

BALLY MIDWAY REORGANIZES EUROPEAN OPERATIONS

Maury Ferchen, president of the coin-op division of Bally Manufacturing, has announced that the European marketing and sales operations of Bally Midway have been restructured.

Under the new plan, Einar Askvig, the managing director of Balexim (Antwerp, Belgium), will assume responsibility for the Benelux and Scandinavian countries, and Hans Kloss, the managing director of Bally Wulff Vertriebs (Hannover, West Germany), will assume responsibility for the German and Swiss markets.

The larger markets of Great Britain, France, Spain, and Italy will be handled by Steve Blattspieler, vice president of marketing and sales for Bally Midway, and Bob Lundquist, president of Bally Sente.

Bally also announced the establishment of an import/export office in Hannover.

BALLY SENTE HOSTS SPANISH DISTRIBUTOR

For three days in January, Bally Sente was host to Senor Felix Hernan, managing director of Maibesa, S.A., a Madrid-based game distributor. Touring Sente's Sunnyvale research and development facility, Senor Hernan displayed a particular interest in the design and programming aspects of the electronic version of *Trivial Pursuit,* a Spanish video edition of which is now being promoted by Maibesa. Senor Hernan was accompanied by Rosa Maria Ceasado, an interpreter, and Jose Antonio Fernandez, Maibesa's design engineer.

Bally Sente's Bob Lundquist (far right) greets Spanish visitors from Maibesa, S.A..

NEWS

APA NEWS

January saw two tournaments that appear to have been promising send-offs for a series of state and national programs the Amusement Players Association is planning for this year.

APA co-sponsors and top finalists take a bow following competition.

Players gather at the U.S. Video Game Team's national tournament.

The Texas "State Player of the Year" tournament, held on January 11 in Bally's Aladdin's Castle in Austin's Barton Creek Square Mall, tested player skills on Bally Sente's *Night Stocker,* Nintendo's *VS. Slalom,* and Tradewest's *Victory Road.*. First prize went to Donn Nauert, of Austin, who came up with the best combined percentage totals for the three games. For his efforts, Nauert took home the 1986 state title and a refurbished *Gyruss* game.

The second competition--the first national event hosted by the U.S. video game team this year--was held January 18 and 19 in the California Room at the Airport Hilton in Los Angeles. Two dozen top- ranking players from around the country competed on *Night Stocker,* Bally Midway's *Power Drive,* and Romstar's *Arkanoid.* Donn Nauert was back on the scene with a high score of 3,963,900 for *Night Stocker,* Tim Uveda, of Los Angeles, captured first spot for *Power Drive,* with 170,900 points; and Joe Feldt, of Silver Spring, Md., took the honors for *Arkanoid,* with a score of 1,295,420. Based again on combined percentage totals, Nauert walked away with the overall championship and the national player-of-the-year title. The title earned him a spot on the U.S. National Video Game Team.

The two tournaments were part of a series of state and national competitions aimed at promoting civic responsibility and providing a more wholesome image for video games as a pastime. The entry fee proceeds for the Texas tournament went to the Central Texas chapter of the March of Dimes.

During the Los Angeles competition, the U.S. Video Game Team also awarded Bally Sente's Bob Lundquist a plaque for the "Players' Sportsman of the Year."

In other news, the APA has announced a special offer in connection with its recently premiered newsletter, *Top Score.* The association is offering operators associate membership status, which gives them a one-year subscription to the quarterly newsletter and includes a number of programs "structured to increase game revenues and help foster better relations between players and operators." Associate members, for example, receive discounts for various APA events and can submit scores to the APA International Scoreboard.

The APA's first issue of *Top Score,* which came out in the last quarter of 1986, profiled Los Angeles's Captain Video arcade and took its readers on a tour of the Atari Games facility. It also included playing reports, high scores, contest news, and game reviews (*Night Stocker, VS. Slalom, Championship Sprint,* and *Special Force*).

BULLSHOOTER II ROLLS ON

Results are back from the third of five regionals in Arachnid's BullShooter II National Grand Tour.

The Northwest regional, held

Arachnid's Bob Hodges (left) congratulates Mike Mecham.

January 17 and 18 in Portland, Ore., drew 356 entries from Oregon, Washington state, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, and Alaska. Mike Mecham, of Eugene, Ore., took first prize among 78 contestants in the open singles, and he teamed up with Diana Wall, of Olympia, Wash., for first place in the mixed doubles. Steve Minnis, of Boise, Idaho, and Brian Ridley, of Gooding, Idaho, outshot everyone in the open doubles, and

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NEWS

Saundra McDonald and Tammy Clason, both of Salem, Ore., won the women's doubles.

LIVE' JUKEBOX

In an industry that builds its customer base on the latest technology, Helen Reutzel's Pittsburgh company is an anachronism. Telephone Music Service is among the last--if not the last--remaining "live" jukebox services in the world. Established in 1929 by Reutzel's father, Bill Purse, the service works like this: when a customer in a tavern or restaurant drops a coin into the jukebox, he picks up the telephone on top of the jukebox. On the other end of the line is Helen Reutzel, in her studio, with the more than 100,000 records that make up her library. His request is her command. The music is piped into the tavern over the telephone lines.

Services like Reutzel's were common before World War II, and at one time, her father's clients included more than 120 bars and restaurants. Today, Reutzel serves only eight establishments, but she's trying to keep the business going. You might says she's trying to keep the past alive. We wish her luck.

MOUNTAIN COIN HOSTS BRONCO PARTY

Mountain Coin of Denver, invited customers to a Bronco Appreciation Day soon after SuperBowl Sunday. Though the Denver Broncos didn't win Superbowl, Denverites were proud of the team and Mountain Coin put on a party to prove it. The Rocky

Mountain area distributor tapped a keg for over 60 area operators and gave away NFL footballs, hats, T-shirts, and wall plaques for door prizes.

"We'll win next year!" vowed the staff of Mountain Coin.

GRAND LIZARD AND RIVIERA ARTWORK WIN AWARDS

Sun Process received the gold award for its entry, Grand Lizard and the silver award for its Riviera entry in the Screen Print 1986 Golden Squeegee Awards. The selections, entered in the flat glass and mirrors category, were printed for Williams and Merit respectively.

The Elk Grove Village, Ill., company also was presented a gold award for the video decal, Predators, printed for Williams, and entered in the promotional/specialty advertising decal category.

CANADIAN WOMAN ARRESTED

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police authorities in Kitchener, Ontario, Canada, advised Robert Fay, director of industry affairs and enforcement for AAMA, that Catherine Mary Dibattista had been convicted of violating Canadian criminal customs statutes. Dibattista was convicted in a scheme of undervaluing printed circuit boards being shipped from Korea to Canada, and for falsifying Canadian Customs documents. It should be emphasized that the charges are criminal and not civil.

On January 23, Dibattista plead guilty to section 238 of the Canadian Customs Act and was sentenced by a provincial court judge in Kitchener to 18 months probation in connection with the scheme. In a separate civil action she may be required to pay as much as $87,000 in Canadian dollars to repay the Canadian government for sales tax evasion as a result of underevaluation of several shipments of printed circuit board. Fay told Play Meter that although it may sound like she got off without a prison sentence, under the terms of her probation she will be closely supervised by the courts. Any infractions of that probation could result in a jail term.

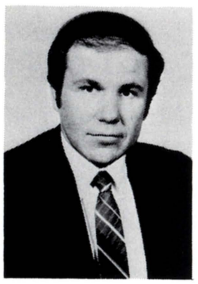
Dibattista, who operated Intertrade and Video Wholesalers, was originally charged on July 22, 1986 with violating several sections of the Canadian Customs Act and had her companies searched by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police on May 28 and several hundred illegal boards were seized.

U.S. customer lists were seized and the FBI and Fay are working closely with the Royal Canadian Mounted

NEWS

Police on the additional evidence.

PHILIP MORRIS APPOINTS KUHLMAN



James Kuhlman

James R. Kuhlman has been appointed to the position of director of region sales for Los Angeles. Kuhlman joined Philip Morris in 1970 as a sales representative.

VENDING LICENSE FEE CHANGES IN ILLINOIS

A new Illinois law, signed by Governor James Thompson in early February, requires cities and towns whose population is under one million to notify vending machine license holders 30 days before increased license fees can be put into effect.

National Automatic Merchandising Council counsel William Brandstrader said, "Our Illinois council members have worked hard for two years to get the legislature to adopt this provision under its Operation Roll Back Program. He also noted that there is a similar program in effect in Minnesota. Brandstrader estimated that the Roll Back program has accounted for up to $90,000 in annual license fee savings.

JACOBS NEW SNK PRESIDENT, MOMODA IN SALES

Paul Jacobs, SNK's executive vice president and general manager, has been promoted to the position of president of the U.S. office. At an SNK board of director's meeting held in Osaka Japan on February 20, Jacobs was named the new president; Shinici Ikawa, the former president of the U.S. office, will return to Japan as the domestic and overseas sales manager for the parent corporation.

Jacobs, who has been in the industry for many years, has been with Meadows Games, Exidy, and Meltec. He expressed his delight in his new position by telling Play Meter, "I'm pleased with SNK's commitment and patience in bringing a Japanese game into the U.S. market. Mr. Kawasaki has placed his confidence in me and has a deep understanding of the two markets (U.S. and Japan) and that the two are not necessarily parallel as far as products. It is this understanding that will lead SNK to success with its products."

Jacobs said that the *Bermuda Triangle* game scheduled to be shipped in mid February will now be ready about ACME time. "We have held back to incorporate several program changes suggested by players at our test sights," Jacobs said. "Thanks to the cooperation of the parent company, we have taken a good game and made it into a great game."

Jacobs said that in addition to *Bermuda Triangle* SNK will show a game called *Psycho Soldier* at ACME. "Please quote me on this," Jacobs urged Play Meter. "The game is dynamite!"

In other SNK news, Jerry S. Momoda Jr. has been appointed western regional sales manager for SNK's coin-op division. Besides working with distributors west of the Mississippi, he will be involved in market research and product development. Momoda was previously with Sega in management and sales and was with Nintendo for three years as a market research analyst.

Linda Lavin has been named consumer products manager in charge of sales to SNK marketing representatives for consumer products. SNK's first entry into the consumer field is *Ikari Warriors* for the Nintendo Entertainment System. SNK had originally licensed *Ikari Warriors* and *Victory Road* to Tradewest, which sold them as dedicated games. Both topped equipment poll charts in the U.S. and Japan. SNK has licensed Data East U.S.A. to manufacture and market *Ikari Warriors* in disc format for both Apple and Commodore personal computers.

BUCCANEER FILES SUIT

Video Craze, Inc. d/b/a Buccaneer Video Sales and Service in Clearwater, Fla. has filed suit in Pinnellis County, Fla. against Status Games, a Connecticut-based manufacturer. The suit cites breach of rights in contract matters.

Buccaneer's Curtis Sarver claims that he had developed a good working relationship with Status after selling over a quarter of a million dollars worth of Status' first trivia game. When Status mentioned that it was looking to break into the European market, Buccaneer agreed to represent Status in Europe. Because of the friendship involved, Sarver says Status' Mike Yaffa declared that an oral contract would suffice.

After Buccaneer exhibited at various European shows, and consequently making a large deal with one of the breweries, Status then attempted to finalize those negotiations without honoring its oral contract with Buccaneer, in affect, stepping over Buccaneer to deal with the brewery direct. Sarver explained that the breweries in England control the majority of the market, thus the significance of the deal.

Sarver told Play Meter that Keith Skelding was working for Buccaneer at the time the brewery deal was secured but was fired a short time later. Status, he claims, then hired Skelding and proceeded to contact the brewery to finalize the deal "behind our backs." Ironically, two others who had been working for Buccaneer at that time are now also employed by Status.

Sarver also told Play Meter that a trade publication in England had quoted Status' Irv Jeffries as saying that Buccaneer was, in fact, Status' exclusive distributor in Europe. A pre-trial was scheduled to be held in early March.

Mike Yaffa of Status could not be reached for comment.

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NEWS

AMOA NATIONAL DART ASSOCIATION

The AMOA National Dart Association announced that Merit *Bull Buster* Darts, Valley *Cougar Darts*, and Merit-Nomac *Pub Time Darts* will be the official tournament machines of the Second annual National Team Dart Tournament to be held at the Ramada O'Hare, Chicago, Ill., May 1-3, 1987.

There will be two skill levels in both the Women's Divisions and the Open Division. The tournament is open only to four-person teams that have played in AMOA National Dart Association Member Leagues.

The National Dart Association was formed to coordinate and create standardized programs for the ever increasing number of AMOA members who have included dart leagues among the services they provide their locations.

The National Tournament is only one of the services envisioned by AMOA-NDA directors. If you would like to help, or if you are interested in obtaining additional information about operating darts, contact your coin machine distributor, any of the sponsor manufacturers listed above, any National Dart Association member, or Joe Conway, Executive Director of the AMOA-NDA at (414) 263-2444.

FILMATION LICENSES ANIMATED SERIES TO SALLY INDUSTRIES

Filmation, the animation division of Group W Productions, has signed an agreement allowing Sally Industries, Inc. of Jacksonville, Fla., to market a new interactive ride titled *Ghostbusters*, for amusement parks throughout the world.

The ride involves new laser technology that enables the audience to participate in the action by shooting ghosts electronically, hence the term interactive.

Sally Industries is one of the leading producers of animatronic characters, moving and talking computer controlled figures. Sally Industries introduced the new concept for family entertainment at the International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions' show in New York and was given the Edward L. Schott award for the most outstanding exhibit of equipment and supplies for the industry.

BALLY BUYS BACK TRUMP HOLDINGS

Bally Manufacturing Corp. has bought back New York developer Donald Trump's 9.9 percent of Bally stock, which will enable the company to proceed with plans to buy the Golden Nugget Casino in Atlantic City, New Jersey.

Bally and Trump were in the news in December (see *Play Meter* December 1986, page 7) when Bally filed suit against Trump alleging that he and related entities violated federal securities and antitrust laws. Bally then adopted a shareholder rights plan to deter any takeover attempts.

According to a February 24 article by The Associated Press, "Trump agreed to sell back to the company 3.1 million shares, or 9.9 percent of the outstanding stock, for $83.7 million." Bally reportedly paid $24 for each of the 2.6 million shares and will purchase the other 457,000 shares at $33 each as long as the market value does not reach that figure in the next year.

OCMA SEEKS HELP FIGHTING PROPOSED CIGARETTE TAX

In response to proposed budget bills that would raise Ohio's cigarette excise tax, the Ohio Coin Machine Association (OCMA) board of directors has asked the Ohio Tobacco Action Network (TAN) to call an emergency meeting of its advisory council to help coordinate efforts to combat this threat.

Bills causing the controversy are House Bill 171 and House Bill 231 that include a proposal to raise the tax from 14 cents to 19 cents per pack of 20, or an increase of 35.7 percent. Hearings began in February and the tobacco industry will testify in March.

OCMA urges its members to contact state legislators to voice their opposition to the proposed taxation. It is feared that such a tax would drive sales across the border to lower tax states such as Kentucky. When Michigan increased its cigarette tax, cigarette sales in northern Ohio rose.

The city of Cleveland is the latest Ohio community to pass smoking restrictions. Current laws ban smoking in grocery, retail and department stores and requires employers of 10 or more persons to accommodate employees who want a smoke-free environment.

NYSCMA TRADE SHOW FEATURES SEMINARS

The New York State Coin Machine Association (NYSCMA) 1987 trade show and annual meeting, set for April 3-5 at the Turf Inn in Albany, will offer service and educational seminars plus an address by Bob Fay, director of industry affairs and enforcement for the American Amusement Machine Association (AAMA).

The service seminar, sponsored by Rock-Ola Manufacturing Corp. and conducted by Shuja Haque, will be offered twice for the convenience of show attendees. The management seminar will include a panel discussion on tax laws, laser discs, 8-ball tournaments and leagues. Participants are Vic Conte of Victor Conte Sales, Ted Howell of Mobile Record Service, Don Liberatore of Don Records, Joe Pankus of Seeburg Corporation and Ed Adlum of *Replay* magazine.

Bob Fay's address, Avoiding Prosecution, should be well attended as AAMA has been successful in fighting the importation and use of counterfeit and parallel video game boards.

Among the companies exhibiting at the NYSCMA show are: Ace Novelty

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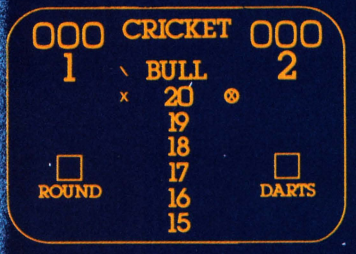

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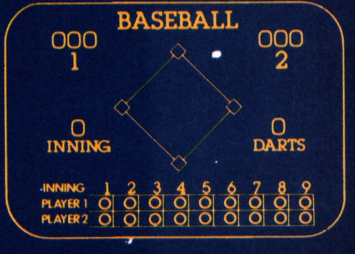

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NEWS

Company, Anchor Distributing, Betson Enterprises, Brandt Systems, Coin Machine Distributors, Cummins-Allison Corp., Dan Brechner and Company, Dart World, Don Records Corp., J-S Sales Company, Mobile Record Service, Mondial International, Roth Novelty Company, T.O.P Distributing, Upstate Distributing, Syracuse Coin Machine Exchange, The Valley Company and Victor Conte Sales.

Tickets may be obtained from NYSCMA headquarters, 427 Kenwood Ave., Delmar, NY, (518) 439-0981.

RSROA SCHEDULES 50TH ANNIVERSARY SHOW

The Roller Skating Rink Operators Association (RSROA) will host its 50th anniversary convention and trade show May 10-14 at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas, Nevada.

Among exhibitors demonstrating coin-op equipment at the trade show will be Betson Enterprises, Rowe International, Skee-Ball, Inc. and Theisen Vending of Minneapolis.

Seminars, chapter meetings, and general sessions are scheduled in addition to the product and service exhibits. Rink operators, managers and coaches from all over the country are expected to attend the convention.

Anyone interested in further information may contact Pamela Myhre or Patty Shorney at RSROA headquarters, P.O. Box 81846, Lincoln, NE 68501, or call (402) 489-8811.

ADAMS JOINS BETSON PACIFIC

Ken Adams

Betson Pacific has announced that Ken Adams has joined the vending sales group of its South San Francisco office. Adams is a former American League hockey player who spent 20 years with Moyer Diebel Corporation, first in Buffalo, N.Y., and then in Chicago, as its Midwest regional manager.

Adams joined Bally Midwest three years ago.

DATA EAST NOW A VS. LICENSEE

Data East USA, Inc., has entered into a VS. license agreement with Nintendo of America Inc. Under the terms of the agreement, Data East will manufacture and distribute software for Nintendo's VS. System in the United States, Canada, Europe, and Japan.

"Data East's participation in our VS. licensing program," says Minoru Arakawa, president of Nintendo, "assures operators of a steady stream of quality software."

According to Bob LLoyd, president of Data East USA, his San Jose, Calif.-based company hopes to show at least one new VS. System Pak at ACME, with shipments starting in April or May.

Nintendo's other VS. System licensees are Jaleco, Tecmo, Sun Electronics, and Konami.

SYNTECH NAMES REDD AS CHAIRMAN

William "Si" Redd, founder and chairman of the board of International Game Technology, has been appointed chairman of the board of Syntech International Inc.

Redd, who recently celebrated his 75th birthday, replaces Gordon Graves, who resigned as chairman in February and turned over his responsibilities as CEO to a three-member committee. Redd will continue as chairman of IGT, which is said to own 49.3 percent of Syntech.

CALENDAR

APRIL 3 4 5

New York State Coin Machine Association (NYSCMA) Trade Show, Turf Inn, Albany, N.Y. Contact Ann Kelley or Curt Matterson at NYSCMA headquarters, c/o Matterson Associates, 427 Kenwood Ave., Delmar, NY 12054, (518) 439-0981.

14 15 16

Nightclub & Bar Expo, Georgia International Convention Center. To register call 1-800-247-3881.

23 24 25 26

Florida Amusement/Vending Association (FAVA) Music and Games Show, Omni International Hotel, Orlando, Fla. Contact FAVA, P.O. Box 13089, Tallahassee, FL 32308, (904) 878-3134.

MAY 1 2 3

Amusement and Music Operators Association (AMOA) Second Annual National Team Dart Tournament, Chicago. Contact John Fetters, AMOA Dart Association, 111 E. Wacker Dr., Chicago, IL 60601, (312) 644-6610.

11 12 13

AMOA 1987 Government Affairs Conference, Omni Shoreham Hotel, Washington D.C. Contact AMOA, 111 E. Wacker Dr., Chicago, IL 60601, (312) 644-6610

JUNE 4 5 6

Ohio Coin Machine Association Convention. Holiday Inn/Cleveland-Independence, Ohio. Contact OCMA (614)221-8600.

12 13 14

Illinois Coin Machine Operators Association annual meeting and trade show, Holiday Inn, Decatur, IL. Contact ICMOA, 710 East Ogden Ave., Suite 113, Naperville, IL, 60540, (312)369-2406.

23 24 25

Pay Phone Annual Conference & Exhibition (PACE), Atlanta Waverly Hotel. For information call (800)227-1234 or in Ill. (312)986-1432.

24 25 26

Bowling Proprietors' Association of America Convention. Hilton Hawaiian Village, Honolulu, HI. Contact Vladimir Wapensky (817)649-5105. (AAMA will be exhibiting. Contact David Weaver (703)548-8044.

SEPTEMBER 25 26

The Michigan Coin Machine Operators Association Convention. Clarion Hotel, Lansing, MI. Contact Walt Maner, (517)372-2323.

INTERNATIONAL SHOWS

APRIL 6 7 8 9

The Arab International Toys, Games, and Amusements Trade Fair, Dubai, United Arab Emirates. Contact World Trade Promotions, Ltd., 19-21 High St., Sutton, Surrey SM1 1NF England. Telephone 01-642-7688.

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NEWS

PREMIER ANNUAL SALES SEMINAR

Premier Technology held its first annual sales seminar at Chicago's Gaslight Club O'Hare on January 17. The day's schedule included guest speaker Jim Cathcart from LaJolla, California, review of sales training films, and a peek at Premier's new pinball *Monte Carlo.*

In addition, distribution sales personnel had an opportunity to direct questions to Gil Pollock, president of Premier, and his design and sales team.

Jeff Walker, vice president of sales and marketing, stated that the company would continue to offer these types of cooperative programs to strengthen its limited distribution network.

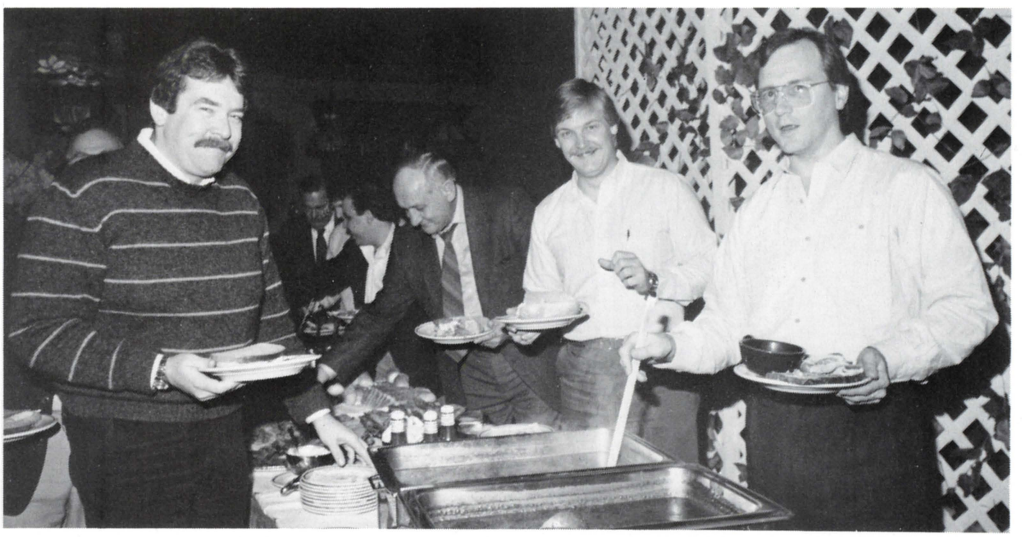
Backglass star and Gaslight girl Sharon signs an autograph for Merlin Symes of Mountain Coin.

Enjoying a game on *Monte Carlo* are, left to right: Irv Spinack of Mondial, Doug Wilson of Banner and Jason Robilliard of Laniel.

More game players, left to right: Jeff Tarantelli of T.O.P. Distributing, John Buras and and Jeff Walker of Premier.

Gil Pollock, left, and Jeff Walker, right, greet guest speaker Jim Cathcart.

Brady staffers (left to right) L. A. Wriston, Tom Keil, Charles Stutz and Leeanne Bullard talk with Joel Kleinman, right, of Pioneer Distributing.



A ten course Gaslight buffet is enjoyed by Rick Tills of Pioneer Distributing, left; Raleigh Rossow, center, and Tom Keil of Brady Distributing.

Trying their luck at the craps table are, left to right: Paul Wiederanders and Scott Lippman of Atlas Distributing, Mike Vrettos of Premier, and Alan Kramer of Mountain Coin.

UFO ROBO DANGAR

DANGAR will transform your games into profits with proven longevity. The ultimate power-up formation game!

The game is themed around transforming robots, the biggest craze all over the country!! Cash box reports say "Yes, Yes, Yes!" to the value offered in this vertical conversion kit. The price is set to please the operator who has need for a healthy R.O.I.!!

3-Ship formation! Break through the enemy barriers!

Awesome rocket punches are very useful!

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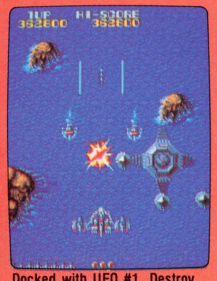
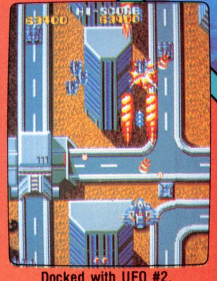


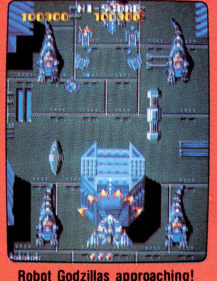
Docked with UFO #1. Destroy the mid-sized enemy ship!

Transported to dimension #1. Formation attack #1!

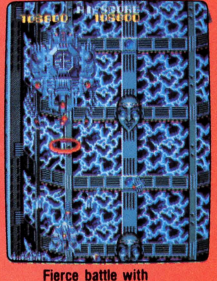


Docked with UFO #2. Destroy enemy tanks!

Dimension #2. UFO #2 formation completed.



Robot Godzillas approaching! Beware of their fire balls!



Fierce battle with enemy mother ship!

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Betson staff members and manufacturer representatives gather at Syracuse open house.

Betson celebrates opening new office

Bette Lockhart draws a winning door prize ticket from David Lerner.

Betson Enterprises, the New Jersey-based distributorship, recently opened a new office in Syracuse, N.Y., called Betson/Advance Distributing. The Advance part of the name was at the request of branch manager David Lerner, whose father, Morris, owned and operated a company in Syracuse called Advance Distributing.

Betson invited manufactures and operators to help celebrate the opening of the new office and over 200 guests enjoyed a delicious buffet and chatted with the new branch office personnel as well as the principals from the New Jersey office, Joe Cirello, Kevin Fritz, John Feltz, Bob Geschine, and Bob Boals; Rick Kirby from New England Coin Op and Bob Betti of the Conn. office were also there.

Besides David Lerner, other Betson/Advance personnel include Greg

OPEN HOUSE

Keevil in sales, Nancy Smith, receptionist, Bill Sherwood, parts and service, and Dave Schaefer, service.

The new office joins other Betson offices in New Jersey, Long Island, Conn., and New England Coin Op in Boston. New England Coin Op opened after Bally closed its office in Boston, and former Bally Distributing Rick Kirby took over that office.

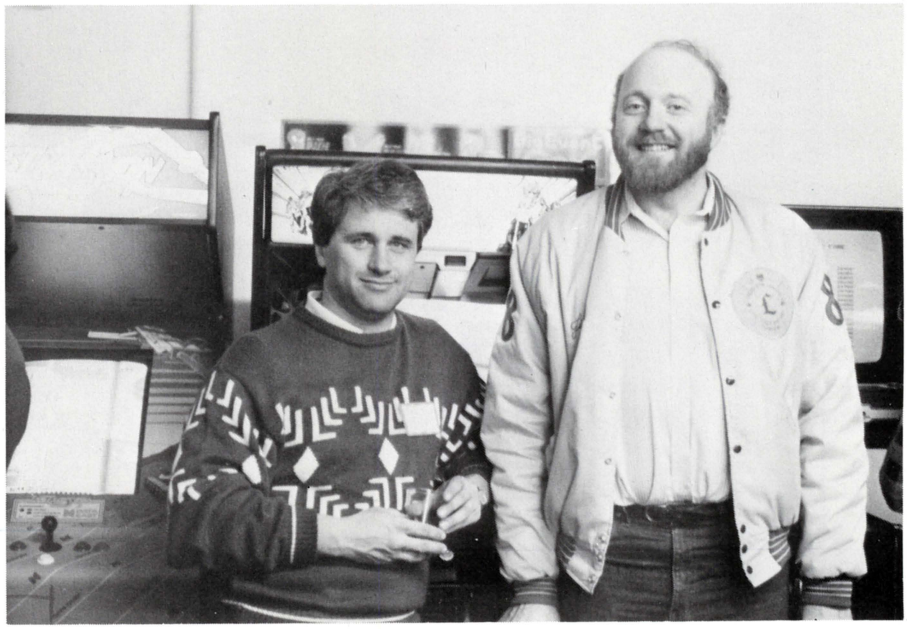
Manufacturing representatives who attended the open house included Merit's Mort Ansky and David Rubinstein, Marty Glazman from Williams, Jim Newlander of Atari, Dynamo's Mark Struhs, Capcom's Bill Cravens, Sega's John Hill, Rene Lopez of Romstar, Frank Bundra of Konami, Shirley Merlo of Arachnid, and Bette Lockhart of Rock-Ola.

Operators attending the open house were generally well pleased with the latest Betson addition. "I'm impressed by Betson's reputation so I'm happy there is an office closer," said a Buffalo operator.

Other operators were glad to have Betson in their area because of service, which seems to be a strong point at Betson and Betson/Advance. "I had bought a few used games that had Betson's sticker on it and the games were very clean. I trust Betson and will be using them often," another operator noted.

Bob Betti, commenting on the new office told Play Meter, "As large as our territory is, we had a void in the Syracuse area that needed to be filled. When we opened in Boston, we felt the time would come when we would need to expand into the Syracuse area."

An operator agreed, "I've been buying games from where ever I could but haven't been happy doing that. I know Betson/Advance will sell me the quality games I expect and will be there when I need service help."



(above) Operators Tom Scimi (left) of The Village Laundries and Jim Bove of 88 Amusements enjoy the open house. (middle) A crowd gathers for door prize drawings. (below) Larry Jenkins (left) of Jenkins Enterprises chats with his Dad, Homer, of Denby Vending.

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C-STORES: THE SECOND PASS

BY RUSTY STORBECK

Rare is the return of the good ole' days. And rarer yet is the return of good ole' days that are better the second time around. But that--or something near it--may be what's happening for some operators these days, thanks to the vagaries of the business worlds and to our own industry's history of boom and bust. The lesson to be learned, it would seem, is that everything, in the end, usually works out for the best.

The story has to do with convenience stores and with a resurgence of interest, on the part of game manufacturers as well as some c-store chains, in freshening up the relationship that has existed between the two industries for at least 15 years now. In a very real sense, perceptions on both sides of the counter are approaching full circle. This time, however, amusement game operators, with a little bit of luck, stand to reel in a market that, in the early 1980s, almost got away.

It's probably safe to say that the relationship began in ernest in 1972, when Southland Corporation first put pinballs into its 7-Eleven stores. At that time, the c-store industry was on its way to becoming one of the fastest growing industries in America. By 1977, there were 32,000 c-stores in the United States, a number that jumped to 58,000 in 1984 and 66,000 in 1985. Industry sales climbed to $61.6 billion by 1985, up $11.5 billion, or 23 percent from 1984.

Around the turn of the decade, the video game industry was enjoying its own prosperity. The boom was beginning to break the sound barrier, with record gross receipts of $5.7 billion in 1979, and each successive year thereafter topping the year before. Collections continued to rise, until they peaked at $8.9 billion in 1982.

In the nine years that followed the placement of the first 7-Eleven pinball game, c-stores were becoming prime locations for amusement games. The figures for that period vary, sometimes widely, but all are positive. By 1981, some 44 percent of the stores responding to a *C-Store Business* poll said they had games. In an October 1981 issue of that same publication, a report on electronic games in convenience stores estimated that 40 percent of all c-store customers played video games regularly, as opposed to only 11 percent just five years before. The number of stores with games tripled in 1982. By 1983, the National Association of Convenience Stores estimated that 68 percent of the 37,000 stores operating at that time had video games. One news account reported that Southland alone had 13,000 amusement games in its roughly 7,000 stores in April 1982 and that it owned 10 percent of the games.

New owners

It's ironic that the reigning wisdom in some quarters of the c-store industry at that time was advising store managers that "operating on a commission basis with an [amusement-game] operator may actually be more lucrative...than owning the games that are on the premises" [*Play Meter,* July 1, 1882]. *C-Store News* reportedly reminded its readers that "there is no expense or investment by the store when machines are placed on a consignment basis." It's ironic because some c-store officials, believing they had found an opportunity to double their game profits, began buying games and hiring in-house amusement game managers whose sole responsibilities were, unlike those of most of their managerial counterparts today, to track game statistics and manage a growing inventory of game equipment.

Monte Ikner handled those duties

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C-store sales climbed to $61.6 billion by 1985.

for National Convenience Stores, which owned Stop n Go. Ikner told *Play Meter* that back in 1983 he kept "elaborate charts on the performance of each game in each store" and compared them to other complex charts he had devised to track each game's performance. Studying player demographics, he determined which locations had the skilled players and which didn't. Perhaps most important, he kept close tabs on gross earnings with reports compiled twice weekly by each store through National Convenience Store's 27 regional offices.

This is precisely where the prize catch almost got away. By the summer of 1983, National Convenience Stores had an inventory of 2,500 games in its 1,150 stores. Southland reportedly had 15,000 games on location through outside operators. But by now, it owned 5,300 games.

Pumping up profits

The profits from the video games themselves were, in part, what enabled such a large purchase of games. Something else, however, was fueling the c-store industry's burgeoning growth: gasoline.

In the early 1970s, c-store operators were able to enter the gasoline market in a big way when the oil shortages sent the price of gas skyrocketing. Before that, they had been prevented from going after an appreciable share of the market by brand loyalty, full-service gasoline dispensing, and the necessity of having corner real estate. Now, however, the dramatic rise in prices either broke those barriers down or lowered them considerably. Consumers set about price-shopping and were willing to drive to off-the-corner locations for gas they could afford. According to Edward Gagnon, an investment analyst writing in the November 3-20, 1986, issue of *Convenience Store News,* "the self-serve phenomenon was born."

This commitment to gasoline retailing, however, changed the face of the industry, resulting in what Gagnon terms an "alteration of the core business." And for convenience stores, he says, the alteration has been dramatic. In order to seriously develop gasoline retailing, the c-store industry has had to close some of its secondary sites and re-invest in prime corner locations. Why? Because corner locations never really lost their value. More important, however, is the fact that, with prices falling at the pump in 1986, consumers no longer need to shop for the cheapest gas. Consequently, convenience--a la the corner location--and product quality are back on the consumer's mind. Which has led, according to Gagnon, to consolidation of the industry. In many cases, this translates into tighter money, or at least closer scrutiny of the bottom line. Which, in some cases, signals reduced profits.

But what about amusement games?

Suffice it to say that when gasoline profits were high, convenience stores could afford to own and manage their own games, even when game collections started to plummet. The changes wrought by gasoline, however, are only part of the picture. Other changes in the convenience store industry, equally dramatic, have affected the c-store/amusement game relationship.

Shadowy competition

"Like soldiers encountering guerrilla warfare," one insider recently wrote, "c-store operators in 1987 are faced with the problem of competing for customers against an ill-defined enemy." What he was talking about is a phenomenon that we've all witnessed in the past decade or so--horizontal retailing, for lack of a better term. With convenience stores competing head to head with the oil companies, not only can the consumer buy gas at a convenience store, he can also buy groceries at a gas station. Oil conglomerates have, in the past, coveted the c-store market as much as the c-store coveted theirs, and large companies like Exxon, Diamond Shamrock, and Tenneco have invited themselves onto the convenience retailing scene, investing in kiosks, converting service bays, and--more and more these days--building true c-store prototypes of their own. The magnitude of their entry into the c-store market has rivaled that of the c-stores' entry into the gasoline market, so much so that, according to *Convenience Store News,* oil retailers now comprise 40 percent of the c-store market.

Adding to the confusion about who is selling what and, more important, who is whose competitor are the changes in retailing that have placed takeout delicatesens in many supermarkets, and salad bars in some c-stores. You can rent movies at your favorite 7-Eleven, which may also happen to be selling Hardee's hamburgers. Drugstores, we find, are selling groceries, and some c-store chains are filling prescriptions. You can breakfast at Circle K on Dunkin' Donuts or the Twin Pack (two sausage biscuits); lunch at Speedy Mart on ethnic foods like shrimp-and fried-vegetable egg rolls or teriyaki; and dine at Kwik Trip in a sit-down arena that serves nightly specials that include multi-course dinners of roast beef, spaghetti and meatballs, fried chicken, and ham. Even some Giant food stores have breakfast bars. In a word, specialization is out, versatility is in. Bob Maich, the new chairman of the National Association of Convenience Stores (NACS) and the head of Silcorp, a Miississauga, Ontario-based corporation that operates 1,050 c-stores, calls it

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"peripheral vision." Without it, he's quoted as saying, "success will be short-lived."

But what does this mean for video games?

Some in the amusement game industry feel that, essentially, it bodes well.

A no-lose situation

Article after article in c-store publications proclaim that space nowadays is at a premium in the convenience store. With video games traditionally accounting for less than one percent of total c-store sales and with gasoline profits down and c-store retailing strategies spread thin from the increasing heterogeneous mix of competitors, one might expect the stores to have ridded themselves of amusement game machines, whose operation requires healthy investments of time, money, and expertise. The statistics, however, tell a different story.

In compiling its most recent industry report, *Convenience Store News* surveyed 34 companies (20 c-store companies and 14 oil retailers) that accounted for a total of 8,400 stores across the country. Forty-six percent of the c-stores and 16 percent of the oil retailers had video games on location in 1985. The percentages for pinballs were 13 and three, respectively. Those figures, at first glance, suggest that the amusement games are still there, but their presence has dwindled.

It hasn't.

Figures available from the National Association of Convenience Stores, whose membership accounted for 21,870 stores in 1985, indicate that 73 percent of those surveyed had video games in their stores that year, a 12 percent *increase* over 1983. The games, then, are still in the stores in abundant numbers. What has changed, in many cases, is ownership.

Mark Schoifet, managing editor of *Convenience Store News*, describes the environment that feeds the dynamics of this change. Since convenience stores appear to be positioning themselves against other types of retail outlets, he says, they're looking at all phases of their own operations. "An operator (of a c-store)," he writes in the January 19-February 5, 1987, issue, "must look at labor intensity. Quality control. Equipment costs. Health regulations. All factors must be taken into consideration. Then (he) must ask himself, 'Is the trade-off worth it?'"

Using the example of video tapes--one of the hottest categories competing for a c-store operator's floor space--Schoifet points out the value of video-tape rentals, a value that attaches even more easily to video games. "In many cases," he writes, "(a c-store) operator has no fixed costs...because turn-key suppliers build and stock the operation. Revenue sharing and other contractual arrangements essentially make video a no-lose situation."

Product manager system

Circle K Corporation has been doing it that way for years. John Glaser, national concession sales manager for the company and one of the few in-house games managers left in the c-store industry, explains that Circle K, which has about 3,500 stores in 25 states, has had games in its stores for more than six years, but has never owned them. Hired for the job in May 1984, Glaser devotes his time entirely to the management of the Circle K games program. Although most chains do have personnel who oversee their game programs, he says, they are usually required to divide their time between the program and other duties, like gasoline purchasing or fast-food services. Circle K, however, uses the product manager system, which hires experts to run a particular division. In fact, Glaser says, "we feel our program is superior to anyone else's because we hired someone in the field to manage it."

Before coming to Circle K, Glaser was a route supervisor with Silco West. The corporation brought him in to reverse the trend of declining income from its games. The outside firm that was managing the games, Glaser says, was not doing what Circle K considered a good job.

Although Glaser has no figures for the number of games in Circle K stores, he says that the 1983 purchase of the UtoteM chain almost doubled Circle K's size as well as its game inventory. He says that 95 percent of its stores have games. What kinds of games does the chain have? Between 70 and 80 percent of the games, according to Glaser, are video games (they take up less space and require less maintenance, he says), and the rest are pins. Cranes are rare, because "we're not sure where they're legal and where they're not."

Most Circle K stores have at least two games and the company says they more than justify the square footage they occupy. Last year, Glaser says, the company's share per store per month of the gross receipts of the machines was up 40 percent over the year before, whose figures themselves were up 20 percent over the previous year. Circle K is definitely pleased with the program.

If Circle K is alone in its use of the product manager system, it is not alone in its recognition of the value of having outside vendors. Three years ago, a division of Southland in the Southwest sold its entire inventory of games and the rights to operate them. At one time, Cumberland Farms owned and operated the equipment in most of its 1,200 stores. According to

Sharon Harris, public relations coordinator for Stan Harris & Company, that chain recently sold off its games and began a search for regional vendors. Stan Harris, one of the companies chosen as an authorized vendor, has operated games in 50 Cumberland Farms stores for about a year and a half now.

According to Harris, convenience stores are beginning to realize the "inherent profitability of maintaining a viable games program." The authorized vendor for more than 200 7-Eleven stores in Delaware, New Jersey, and Southeastern Pennsylvania, Harris says she recently received a letter from Southland's Mid-Atlantic Division that speaks not of direct product profitability or computerized space management, but rather of "rejuvenating" its "aging amusement games category." Part of the reason her accounts still consider games a profitable venture involves that trade-off question that c-stores are concerned with. Line items that require a small investment, Harris says, are attracting more attention these days.

Choosing a vendor

The c-store organizations, however, for all their desire to "leave the driving to us" when it comes to operating games, are careful about who they choose as vendors. When convenience stores first decided to sell off their inventories several years ago, they reportedly went to the game manufacturers for names. Names in hand, however, they began a screening process. Why such care?

At the NACS 25th Annual Meeting and Exposition in New Orleans last November, some c-store operators complained to Bally representatives about the service they were getting from their representatives about the service they were getting from their vendor. Jolly Backer, director of sales for Bally Sente, told *Play Meter* that many of the convenience store owners who came by the booth "weren't happy with the way their video games were looking or collecting." Backer said that some told him that they hadn't talked with an operator in months and that the equipment in their stores was old.

In an article Harris wrote for *Convenience Store News,* she provided a pertinent list of criteria that retail chains should use in choosing a vendor. Drawing heavily on common sense, the list is one that Circle K's Glaser would agree with:

* Reputation for honesty and integrity.

* Financial stability. C-stores are aware of the profit value and the expense of buying new games and rotating old ones. They want a vendor who can afford to handle both.

* Good communications network. C-stores may relinquish the reins, but they still want to know where they're going.

* Good service. Time is money, down time is not.

* Professionalism. C-stores expect the vendor to keep abreast of laws and ordinances.

Such traits not only get the vendor's machines in the door, they also keep them there.

Harris gives other tips on how to keep an account. Games, she says, should be merchandised like any other product. Game areas should be kept clean and well-lit, and in-store contests and promotions used to "attract a larger player base."

Problem-solving, of course, is an integral part of the vendor's job. Women and elderly shoppers shy away from stores whose video games attract rowdy players, a situation Harris has run into. It's nothing that can't be fixed, she says, if the vendor and the location owner put their heads together. At times, she's had to "back down to two, or even one medium level machine" until the clientele changed for the better; other times, she's agreed to limit the hours.

Middlemen

But not to paint things too rosy, in the new multi-service environment of the c-store, games are, to a very real extent, competing with shelf items. Game manufacturers are well aware of this. What's more, with statistics showing that 81 percent of the nation's teenagers visit a c-store at least once a week, Tom Locke, national accounts manager for Bally Sente and Midway, points out that there is "a good correlation between their customers and ours. " Locke views the c-stores this way: "We don't want to take them for granted, or them to take us for granted."

Although Bally was the only manufacturer exhibiting at NACS's November meeting, Locke says that that's the last time manufacturer presence at such a show will be so scant. Not all locations owners can come to the game industry's convention, he says, and few game operators can afford the time and the expense of exhibiting at location trade shows. "Our part," Locke says of the manufacturers, "is to be the in-between man." Calling coin-op amusements "one of the best returns per square foot," Locke explains that manufacturers want to make sure the "awareness of video games as a profit center doesn't fail by the wayside."

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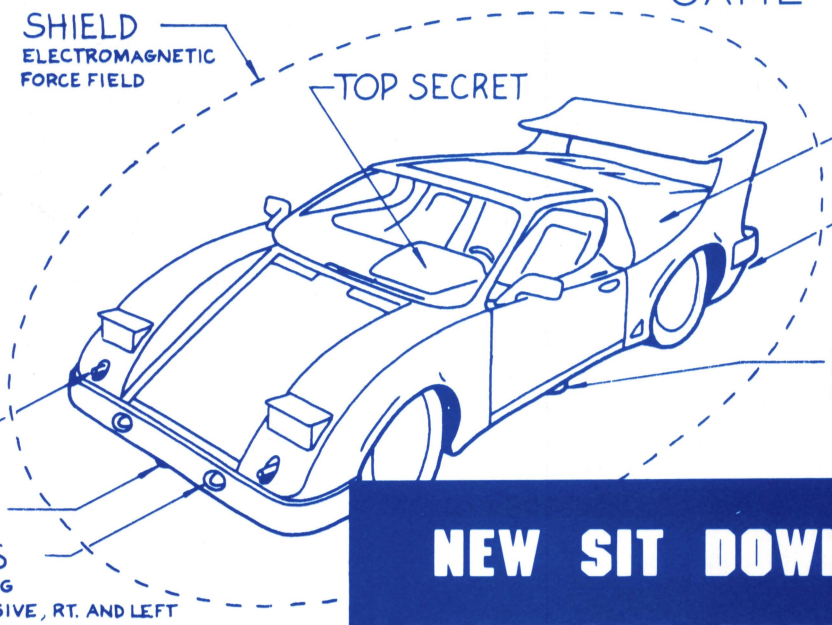

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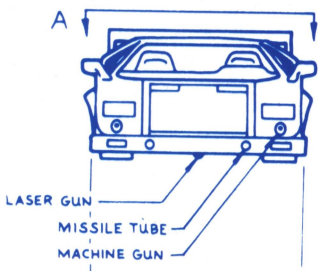

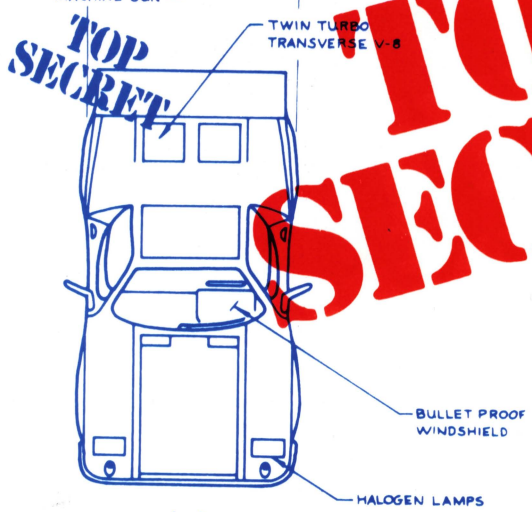

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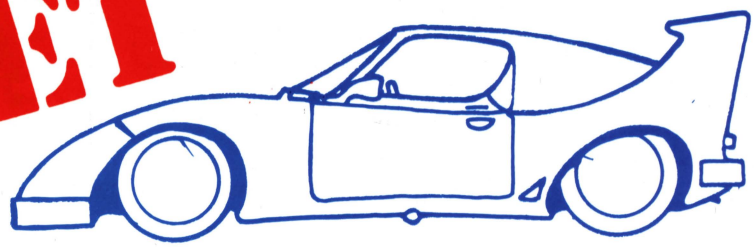

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In the new, multi-service environment of c-stores, games are competing with shelf items.

AAMA efforts

The American Amusement Machine Association is not standing idle, either. According to David Weaver, executive vice-president for AAMA, the organization feels that manufacturers and distributors have a responsibility to promote the industry's products. After setting up a location trade-show committee to direct AAMA efforts along those lines, Weaver says, AAMA president Maury Ferchen changed the name and character of the committee at the November board meeting at AMOA in order to expand its scope. The market development committee, as the newly named committee is called, will address promotion in two ways. One way will be to target the user of amusement machines--the player--through what Weaver calls "a publicity/public relations approach." The idea is to bring new equipment into the public eye through media like MTV.

The other way, Weaver says, will be through an intra-industry approach designed to promote products and the industry to locations and, perhaps to location operators. It involves showing off individual products and making a case for the wisdom of having amusement games at a location. Profits, customer loyalty, additional sales, and crime deterrence are some of the benefits the program will point out. This will be accomplished through direct mail, for example and, as Weaver calls it, the "flagship element" of the approach--location trade shows.

And who does what aboard the flagship? Technically, AAMA is the exhibitor at these shows. It rents a 20' x 40' space at the show, and members--manufacturers and distributors--supply personnel and the latest equipment. There's always an association representative--Weaver or Bob Fay--whose task is to explain why it is both profitable and logical to have a game at a given location. AAMA stresses that it in no way is trying to sell to locations. "We pass on all of our leads to our distributors," commented one manufacturer at a recent show.

The association exhibited at fours shows in 1986--the bowling proprietors show, the licensed beverage operators show, the pizza operators show, and the parks and recreation show. AAMA has scheduled a presence at eight locations shows in 1987, one of which has already taken place (the National Association of Truckstop Operators Trade Show, in New Orleans).

This year, AAMA hopes to enlarge its trade show program by providing seminar speakers at shows that will permit it. Weaver says he will do the talking, dishing out facts and figures that will "educate" locations on the industry. "Part and parcel" of the effort, Weaver says, is to advise location owners to go to local operators to strike up a business relationship or, if one already exists, to strengthen it. Weaver also hopes to incorporate a panel of manufacturers and distributors into the seminar format.

What's to be said of all this? If industry analysts are correct, they have some good news and some bad news. First, the bad news. With the wild and woolly environment of today's convenience store, game operators may find themselves in the middle of that "guerrilla war" of competition that the analysts are eluding to. Of course, that's not so bad--this industry knows what competition is about.

The good news? With c-store investment priorities the way they are, amusement game operators have an opportunity with a big O--namely, to nail down a portion of a lucrative market that, until now, has been out of reach.

Beat up games hold very little appeal to players used to new and exciting challenges. Tucked away next to the cat food, these two games may not look in this photo as bad as they really do.

By contrast, new, well-maintained games prominently exhibited draw players and make money for locations.

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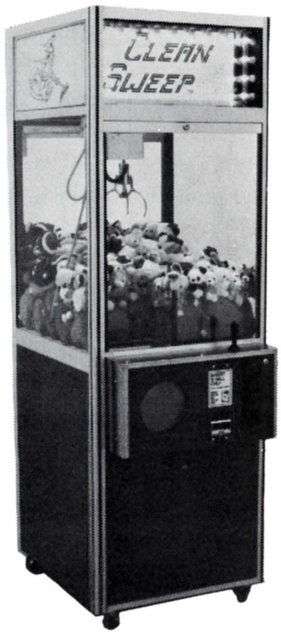

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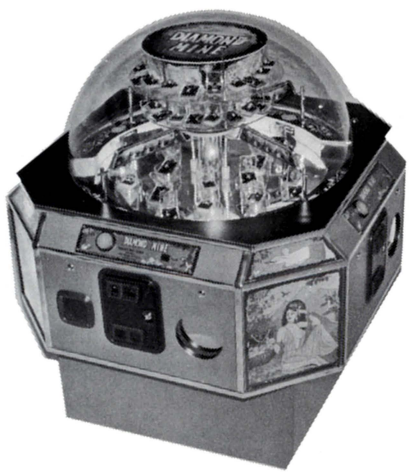

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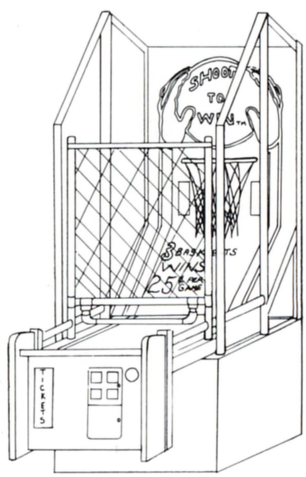

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ATEI-draws over 13,000

BY DAVID SNOOK

The world came to London in January for the Amusement Trades Exhibition International--but strangely, the Americans didn't.

ATEI is reputed to be the world's leading coin machine exhibition in many respects, including attendance by foreigners. This year its international flavor was enhanced by still greater numbers of overseas visitors. The show pulls around 10 percent international attendance of its 13,000 or so admissions--a far higher percentage than any other international show.

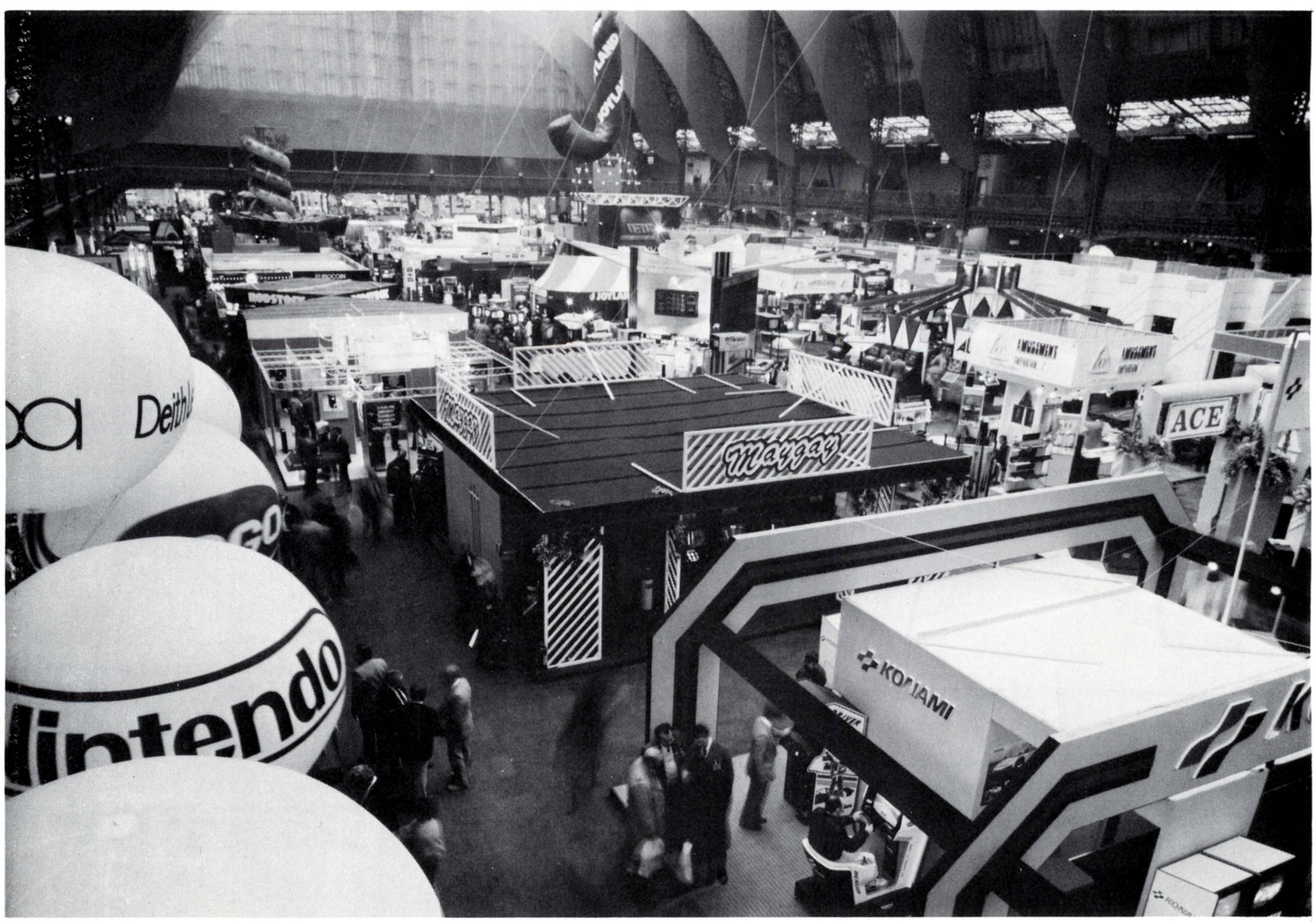
By comparison, the AMOA statistics from 1986 showed a foreign attendance of a paltry two hundred!

Yet for all that the 1987 ATEI, held in Olympia, the exhibition center in West London, attracted more overseas visitors than ever before, even though the Americans were noticeable by their absence. Sure, the usual faces were there such as Williams' Joe Dillon, Belam's Marc Haim and all the rest of the leading manufacturers and distributors. But the ground swell of operators who have traditionally visited London in the chill of January stayed at home.

Why? It's hard to say. Perhaps they now regard Tokyo as the source of all their inspiration. Perhaps the need for a post-New Year exhibition is adequately served by ACME. Or perhaps business at home isn't good enough to finance junkets overseas.

Whatever the reason, the Americans were not in London in the usual numbers this year and the show was the poorer for it.

But to be fair, that was the only respect in which the show was lacking. We saw a revival in the international market in 1986 and on into 1987 with a sparkling display at ATEI. The booths were not larger, but were just as lavish. The colors, the ingenuity, the thought, and the expense--none of them had been spared.



While the other international shows concentrate on the equipment rather than the presentation, ATEI's exhibitors work hard to create flash, the showmanship which is inherent in so many coin machine operators. Double-decker stands, holograph displays, discotheque lighting, mausoleum-like structures, huge shaped balloons and giant slides, vied with the regular modular-style of booth fitting.

The effect was a sight to behold--and combined with the sounds, stunned the senses. It was enough to make the taciturn Joe Burnip, exhibition manager, stray beyond his normal self-effacing standards and confess that it was "the amusement show to end all."

It was the second largest ATEI, just eight exhibitors less than in 1981 when the video game boom was at its height. It covered 152,000 square feet and housed 178 companies, 16 more than last year. Twenty-two of the exhibitors were overseas companies which is considerable considering the fact that so many of the Japanese companies now have British subsidiaries.

David Coren (left), managing director of Brent Leisure and American Alan Stone, of Altcor International are pictured with Nintendo's Play Choice-10.

The 13,000 attendance was virtually the same as in 1986, but still fell way short of the 17,000 of the video games era--a figure never likely to be matched.

So how did Mr. Burnip assess the 1987 event, apart from the sheer spectacle of it all? "Business was clearly much better," he said. "Everywhere I went the exhibitors were telling me that they were delighted with the response."

And now the ATEI planners go back to the drawing board to expand their show still further. The arrival last year of amusement park and carnival equipment at the rear end of the hall, served to add more height, substance and color to the overall effect and also to widen the scope of the show to more accurately fit the all embracing title. "After all," said Mr. Burnip, "it is called the AMUSEMENT Trades Exhibition, so there is no reason to confine it to coin machines." He has made no secret of an ambition to widen the scope still further by bringing in other types of coin machines, such as casino and vending machines.

Some element of gambling is already there, of course. The backbone of the British trade--and it is firstly a domestic show--is the fruit machine or the slot. Its very watered down and highly policed version pays out only $6.00 and half of that has to be in replayable tokens in exchange for a stake of 15 cents. But it nevertheless forms the cornerstone of a highly profitable business in the thousands of pubs up and down the country.

So much so that video games, jukeboxes, pool tables, etc. are very much regarded as ancillary equipment.

However, arcades and other street locations regard non-gambling equipment as highly important, and it was thus with a total mix of clientele that the 1987 ATEI got under way on January 19 for a four-day run.

Improvement spread across the board with almost every sector of the business showing an upturn.

Music was particularly well represented and Seeburg's new LaserMusic system was highly commended in the awards list. It was shown by importer, Atari International, a new organization set up by Atari Games with Shane Breaks at its head, and the British distributor, Joyland.

The threat of the Digital Audio Tape, said to be on its way with equally superb sound qualities at infinitely lower costs, seemed to concern Breaks not the least. "CD is here now. DAT is five years away. I'm not really interested in what's going

Valley's European representative, Jim Griffiths, is shown with Royale Dartes.

to be happening in five years. Before then, everyone will be making CD players, but Seeburg is first. Sony makes the player itself and it is Sony's first venture into the coin-operated machine industry. Sony isn't going to mess around with something which has no future."

Breaks added, "In two or three years there will be no 45 rpm records at all. It won't be like it was when the market for 78s dropped by 40 per cent overnight when 45s were introduced and then held steady for a while. When 45s go out, they'll go all at once." He said that the first 300 Seeburg units into Europe had been sold in advance.

If the UK with its highly sophisticated and professional street operating industry, based on the all-powerful breweries demanding computer print-outs of pub machine results, is a typical example of where music is at these days, then it can be said it's an overall state of flux.

Albert Truelove of Sound Leisure with the reproduction of the Wurlitzer Colonial.

The CD is here and for all Breaks' predictions, the traditional box continues to hold the market and the video jukebox, seen in the UK since 1979, still only occupies around 2,000 units in the British market's 40,000-plus jukebox market.

Hybrid machines, if anything, seemed to be popular at ATEI. These were combination units of video jukeboxes based on compact disc with audio facility as well. Leading operators, MAM Inn Play and Music Hire Group, both of which have sales divisions, concentrated hard on this aspect of jukeboxes. MAM showed a new video jukebox with a hideaway unit utilizing a massive 26-inch color monitor with extension speakers and remote wall selectors. It offered 100 video selections. Music Hire, Rowe distributors, concentrated on Audiovision, a bar-top unit which encompassed just about every combination of compact disc and video music reproduction the operator could want. It mixed both audio and video selections through the same unit in a modular presentation. Two CD players were used with a VCR to play popular video tapes linked to a control unit with five different combinations available. The result was any combination from 100 selections of video to 240 of audio CD or a mix of 50 video and 120 audio.

Britain's own home-grown jukebox manufacturing company, Sound Leisure, famed for its hand-made and faithful reproductions of famous vintage boxes, was even more spectacular this year. Its products are more in demand by higher grade locations seeking something more spectacular than a modern jukebox. This year, Sound Leisure came up with a *1941 Wurlitzer Colonial*, including the famous wagon wheel front and a backcloth design of pioneers. Wurlitzer made 8,000 of them in the 1940s and now Sound Leisure spends four weeks building each one. But in terms of modern playing ability, it has a all-electronic 200-selection mechanism. Continental Coin, the NSM distributor, had the new *Galaxy 200* traditional jukebox straight from the West German factory. Companies like Hazel Grove Music and Music Hire showed their own versions of the immensely popular wallboxes, but with full-view facility.

The pinball scene was comparatively quiet, mainly because the principal manufacturers tend to save their headlines for the West German show, Ima, held in Frankfurt shortly after ATEI. The reason is that the West German market for pinball is traditionally very strong, while the UK market is feeble. This is because way back in 1968 the legislators decided that pinballs were gambling devices and imposed the some restrictions as were on slots. That effectively made pinball operation unfeasible, except in the UK's 2,000 or so amusement arcades. And they don't represent the kind of bulk market which makes manufacturers launch new games at Olympia.

So there it was: Williams with *High Speed*, Premier with *Rock*, Bally Midway with *Karate Fight* and *Special Force*, but nothing to shake the foundations. The Europeans brought out one or two new models, such as Technoplay with *Scramble* which was previously shown at the Enada show in Rome; and Dutch company Jac van Ham with its *Escape* which had been given a debut at the Forainexpo exhibition in Paris in December. Unidesa from Spain had *Pole Position* with more ramps and Williams' *Pin Bot* were the main attractions, the latter taking the laurels.

Bally Midway's *Strange Science* made an impressive debut for the first time in Europe to challenge the dominance of Williams in the market place for the first time.

Among video games were those goodies seen in Tokyo in October or at AMOA in November, although there were one or two additions. The Konami *WEC Le Mans* and Sega *Outrun* continued to dominate a market still obsessed with dedicated cabinet games. If it is the policy of the manufacturers to involve the cabinet as an integral part of the game, then it continues to spell disaster for copiers. That fact was made even more apparent by the presence of only three or four PCB games at ATEI compared with a couple of dozen in 1986.

Apart from the big driving games, Konami managed some new ones in *Gryzoor*, a war-theme board-based game with a underground battleground and some surprisingly good 3D

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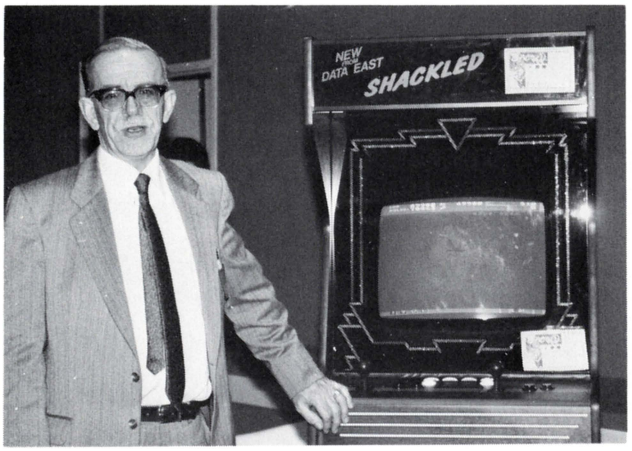

Jim Pryde, European head of Data East's marketing, with Shackled.

Michael Green of Brent Leisure with Nintendo's Play Choice-10.

effects; *Rock n' Range* is a game with a more sophisticated storyline, based on kidnapping; and its basketball game, *Double* Dribble.

Namco produced *Rolling Thunder* to be shown by Atari at ACME. It will be produced in the company's Irish factory for European distribution. According to Shane Breaks, it is the best Namco game in over four years. *Rolling Thunder* has a shooting theme and there were more than a few who agreed with Breaks' assessment.

The three-Monitor *Darius* was on the Electrocoin stand and Data East brought *Shackled* to the marketplace after having shown it as a prototype in Tokyo. Status Games brought its *Clash Road* cycle race game to Europe for the first time and Taito's *Kick and Run* soccer game turned out to be one of the exhibition's major winners. Another, which could be described as a major success, was Nintendo's *Play Choice-10*, which had been installed in a variety of cabinets for street and arcade locations by distributors Deith Leisure and Brent Leisure. The fact that players have a choice of 10 different games in one cabinet may overcome the problems of video games in pubs--a rapid downturn in take. Nintendo's *VS Slalom* also had a successful debut.

One thing that took its share of interest was probably in the least expected field--date retrieval. The previously mentioned situation where the breweries own the vast majority of British pubs, has led to the UK coin machine operating industry becoming the most sophisticated in the world. The income from slots is now so important to breweries that they demand the highest operating standards, right down to computer print-outs giving site identification, coins-in, coins-out, tokens-in, tokens-out and a host of other information including how often and when the machine door has been opened.

All of this is accessed by a data port, now a standard on UK slots. A collector plugs in an "interrogator" linked to a data retrieval unit in a brief case and the information is extracted from the machine. Back at base the information is processed through a computer and a print-out is compared with the actual take from the machine's cash box, right down to checking that the right number of coins from each denomination are there.

The high degree of security thus obtained has meant that a whole new business has grown up in producing the equipment to provide information.

One of the companies actively involved in this work, Playsafe Monitoring, has now spread its experience into allied fields and produced systems for arcades.

Director Peter Simper Jr. said, "A street location operator with many hundreds of pieces of equipment will install one of our major systems which may cost him 40,000 pounds. But an arcade operator isn't going to need something as sophisticated as that. So we've produced a range of systems starting at 2,000 pounds ($3,500)."

The rights to market the system was immediately snapped up by Peter Crozier, who operates out of Toronto and who is now planning to open a U.S. office as well. He said,"U.S. and Canadian games rooms don't have a really effective monitoring system available to them. I can see this system taking off there in a big way."

Playsafe One, fits into an attache case and consists of hardware, applications software, and training and implementation support. It is ideal for up to 400 machines. Playsafe Two, at twice the price, includes a ten-megabyte lap-portable micro-computer with historical analysis of cash, tokens and machine performance. Playsafe Three, $11,000, has a desk-top 20-megabyte micro-computer for the operator requiring variable collection terms, full security monitoring, and comprehensive management reporting. Playsafe Four, at $22,000 is a 80-megabyte multiple terminal micro-computer for the operator who needs data input, inquiries and reporting to be performing simultaneously by several staff members using a shared data bank.

It was one of the things the Americans missed this year! One of many things which undoubtedly made ATEI the most successful show since 1981 when video games were at their peak. Since then the UK and European industries--and it is probably fair to say the international coin machine trade--suffered four years of doldrums.

That started to change with the Tokyo exhibition in 1985 and the signs were there at the following January ATEI and the subsequent AMOA show. The revival is now reaching a height world-wide. What happens next is the question everyone is asking....

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THE COMPANY

Videobox Networks, Inc. is based in New York. It was established in 1983 as a research and development concern and dedicated its efforts to the field of information/video management.

The *Videobox* and *Videobox VRS* are the results of this dedication. The company considers its systems to be both radical and innovative, and its feeling is that interactive, multi-disc systems are "not only feasible but vital for the management of both data and video programming."

BEYOND THE STATE OF ANY ART

First, a glimpse at the basic body of this laser video jukebox. Even though the direction may be towards the future, these machines are still going to have to appeal to locations now.

Put into a traditional location, the *Videobox* might initially appear as a futuristic visitor of sorts. Imagine coin-op color television monitors in the 1952 malt shoppe. *Videobox* is familiar, yet flashy and designed to stand out in a crowd.

The *Videobox* is a little over 56 inches tall, including the video monitor face; only 35 inches wide; 40 inches overall in depth; with clean, attractive lines. The design is sleekly art deco, accented with gold or chrome trim. It's an attention-getter without making a sound, without flashing a video image.

The *Videobox* is built to stand rugged use in challenging spaces. It's made of heavy steel-its surfaces all treated to resist marring. Everything that makes it go is waterproof, dustproof, and capable of cooling itself down under stress. And, not only is the monitor on the box itself a visual display of the musical menu, there may be several optional monitors in the room mirroring the display. *Videobox* is capable of driving any number of monitors, including any size of screen or video projection setup. And the sound system is a powerful 75 watt/channel 3-way.

***Videobox* Park West**

The *Videobox* is actually very simple to use. That's a nice touch from the past. And this new laser disc jukebox certainly looks like it would be fun to play with.

There's a wide selection of music from which to choose. Players can listen to any tune listed from any one of the following: Rock & Roll; Rhythm & Blues/Popular Dance; In concert: Golden Oldies; Country; Jazz; comedy; even sports. The proprietor pre-selects the types of video that accompany the tunes, but once the customer has selected a category, that customer then chooses the specific music video desired, by looking over the menu on the video display. That menu lists the various offerings alphabetically by either artist or title. *Videobox* even lets the player know the top three hits in each category.

One added feature is a bill acceptor. It accepts coins for single play, but takes one- and five-dollar bills for multiple selections.

Videobox allows the location owner to insert commercials or public service announcements into the system, a feature Wurlitzer tried with full-screen videos. *Videobox* offers other management controls for the proprietor, including the ability to set special pricing; ability to set for bonus and free play; capability to censor; access to individualized custom programming, such as accounting and disc popularity rating.

The *Videobox* manages the storage and retrieval of 30, two-sided, 12 inch, high quality laser discs. That provides up to 60 hours of playing entertainment; in other words, up to

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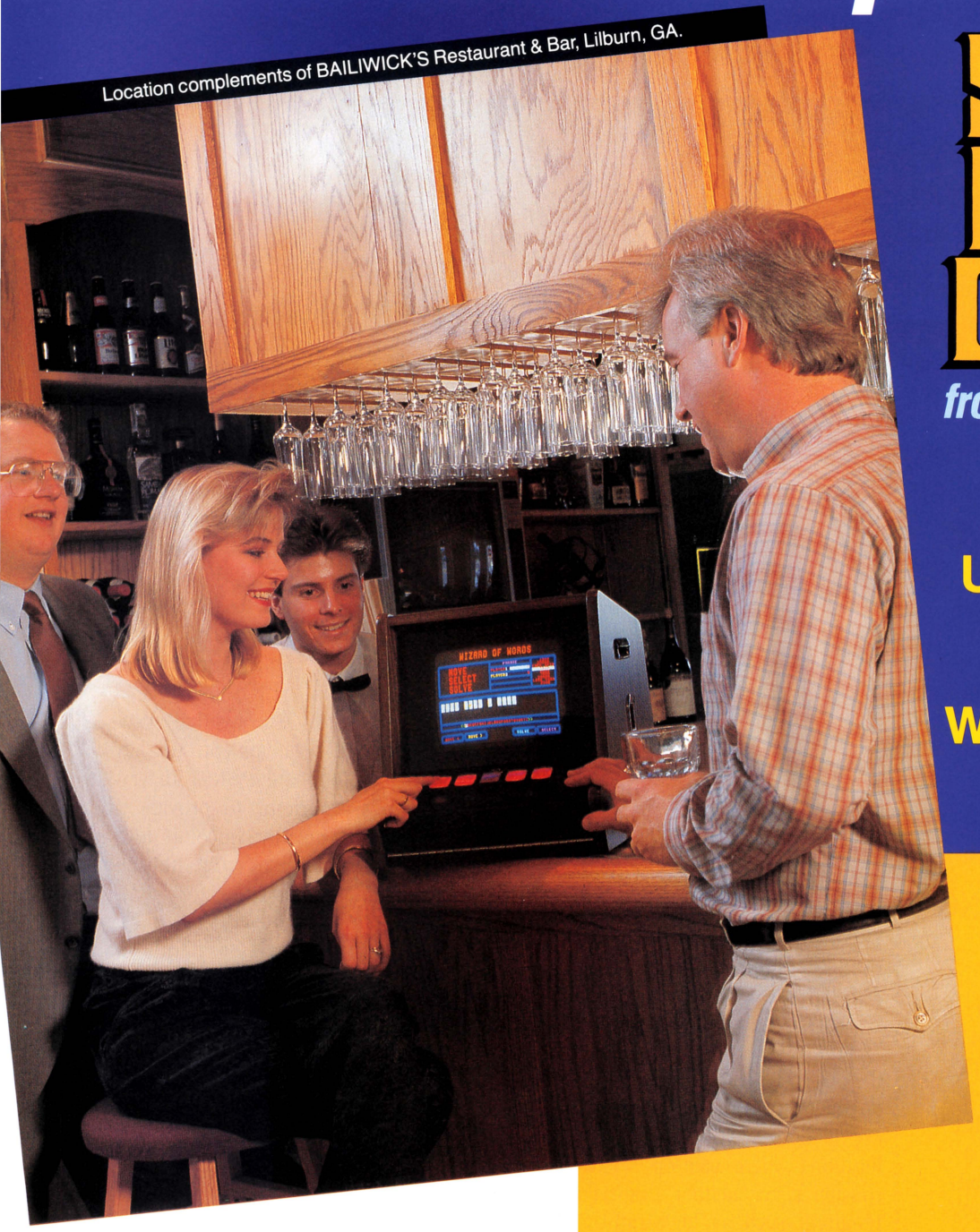

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"Our system, is totally automatic, requiring virtually no human operation. Because it has the high quality of laser discs, the quality of play will be perfect from the first time to the thousandth and beyond."

Another unit in a Houlihans Restaurant

1,000 video selections, compared to 30 or 40 on tape systems or 200 selections on an audio jukebox.

Videobox uses two disc players, custom-built by Pioneer, which provide for continuous up-time and non-stop reliability. This dual-player system allows automatic pre-selection, so that each music video sort of rolls into the next one, without gap, silence or letup.

PLEASE, MR. VIDEO ROBOT, SHOW A SONG FOR ME!

Now let's take a look at robotics, the introduction of the sister system, the *Videobox VRS* (Video Robotic System).

The debut of the first laser disc video robotic system took place in Chicago last year. The concept had been announced in October of 1985. President Justin Korn heralded the *Videobox* laser disc video jukebox as the "ultimate entertainment system." He is no less enthusiastic about the *Videobox VRS*.

"*Videobox VRS* is a unique system designed to provide effortless automatic play of up to ten hours of continuous programming on five, two-hour high-quality laser video discs," said Korn. "Our system," Korn added, "is totally automatic, requiring virtually no human operation. Because it has the high quality of laser discs, the quality of play will be perfect from the first time to the thousandth and beyond."

Korn noted that the success of the *Videobox* led to the spinoff. Where the *Videobox* is coin-operated and designed for location where customer use is desired, the *VRS* is for locations where coin-op selections by consumer are neither desired nor required, such as high-traffic restaurants, clubs and lounges, motel, airports, bus and train stations, conventions and even retail stores.

The owner is able to use the accessory *VRS* to put a touch of his own in between the programming. While the music video function is at rest, a non-stop run of advertising or promotional messages may be run by the proprietor.

The onboard computer system is designed to constantly monitor all its own internal functions and checks all its various components.

Korn stated, "Through advanced research and development, we have created an ultimate system that will allow any proprietor to provide custom, high quality video at low cost. (The proprietor) can utilize our programming capabilities for entertainment or advertising, and alternate custom messages with the video programming for consumers: anything that can be put on video, we can provide from our library or integrate into a program designed to meet the needs of the specific customers."

Videobox Networks said it plans to lease the *Videobox* for about $400 per month and the *VRS* for about $170 per month. Korn has indicated that 500 of the laser disc video jukeboxes have already been shipped and there are orders for more.

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- A woman warrior, dressed in form-fitting armor and armed with a machine gun. Her armor and shield protect her well, so she must be shot several times. Each shot removes a piece of her armor until her entire suit is gone. Only then is she vulnerable to one last shot to destroy her!
- In addition to the enemies, the player must destroy flying targets before they reach the ground.

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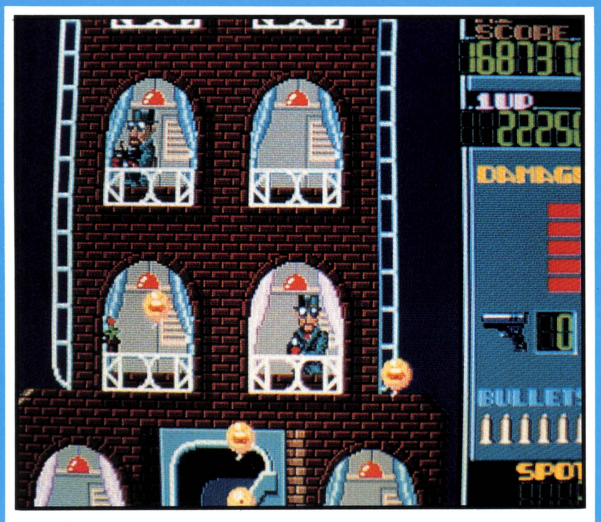

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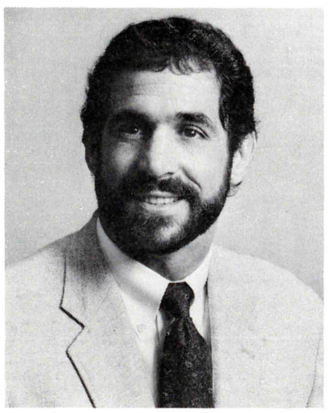
"My distributor should know me and my route well enough that he will sell me the right games."

BY VALERIE COGNEVICH



Frank Ballouz

Nintendo's Frank Ballouz has one of the most familiar faces in the coin-op industry. He has been on numerous panels at trade shows and is currently on the standardization committee. And yet, he has never been the subject of a coinman interview! Up until now that is. I finally cornered him while he was in New Orleans recently and managed to get him to sit still long enough to ask him a few questions about his company and the industry.

Frank had been working with the AB Dick company in Miami around 1974 when he met Gene Lipkin who was, at that time, with Allied Leisure. Soon after, Gene left Allied Leisure to work for a new video game company called Atari. Frank heard that Gene was looking for someone with sales experience and Frank knew he was the man for the job. The first Pongs *had been shipped in 1972 so the company was just two years old when Frank began his coin-op career with Atari.*

Frank joined Atari as national sales manager but during his eight years there was director of marketing and vice president of marketing.

Frank was thoroughly involved in all aspects of bringing products up through initial research to marketing. It was something Frank said meant a lot to him. After leaving Atari, not entirely his own choice, Frank took a well-deserved vacation and less than a year later was presented another opportunity to work in the industry he had come to love. While at a distributor showing in San Francisco, he met Ron Judy of Nintendo and the subject of Frank's joining Nintendo came up. Frank was thrilled to join Nintendo. However, he became discouraged because of the lack of product interface, an important part of his stint at Atari, and reluctantly left to take a position at Mylstar. "Mylstar got me with pure greed," Frank quips.

However, at Mylstar, Frank was exclusively in product development and not involved in the sales and marketing that were his specialty. The company was owned by Columbia Pictures which was owned by Coca-Cola. Frank describes the owners as wonderful but not frontline businessmen. The spontaneity that had been alluring became staged and unsatisfying. Frank describes being stifled by people who knew nothing about the industry.

Disillusioned with his job at Mylstar, Frank ran into Ron Judy once again and they discussed his returning to Nintendo. Ironically, Frank came full circle in his coin-op career when negotiations to rejoin Nintendo were completed while he was in Hawaii, the same place he left Atari.

What are some of the most significant differences in working for a Japanese company as compared to an American company?

The biggest difference for me is the product not being developed in the U.S. so I don't see the evolution of the product. I miss all the involvement of seeing a game from the story board, to just characters on the monitors, to the game play, to getting it out on test, getting market research, and tweaking it. I miss that involvement.

At what point do you get involved with Japanese games?

It's getting better and better. In the beginning, as with *Mario Bros.*, the first time we even saw the game was when we uncrated it at the AOE show. At Atari I could just go in to talk with the engineers and since I knew them well, it was a lot easier to tell them their baby was ugly. But when you're dealing with people 5,000 miles away that you don't

know, its all different. They made all of the decisions. If they wanted to do something they did, if not, they didn't. Now we are getting product a lot sooner. They are giving us the opportunity to tweak games a little and make suggestions. However, with the new product coming out, there is not that much flexibility for making changes.

Nintendo is a little different from some Japanese companies because our American president, Mr. Arakawa has more authority and influence than some of the other presidents of American offices. Nintendo does not have as many problems as others do. Mr. Arakawa interfaces with Japan and can get things done.

Speaking about new products, tell us a little about the *Play Choice-10.*

We see it as our future. We will continue to support the VS system, however, but right now Nintendo's emphasis is on *Play Choice-10.* I'm so enthused about this product that I could talk all day about its benefits but I'll just name a few here. It is one cabinet with the capability of holding 10 games. It offers a wide range of games for a larger range of clientele; it reduces complaints from the locations about not having enough games; it reduces the cost of placing equipment on location; it takes up only a tenth of the space as 10 games would; and it has steady earnings.

I would imagine there would be questions about dependability since there are 10 games in one cabinet.

Nintendo has a reputation for high quality products. Operators can be comfortable with it. There is a minimum of down-time because if one board goes out, there are still nine games. I'd also like to add that now with the "Gimme 10" promotion we have going, an operator can get 10 games valued at $2,000 for only a $25 shipping fee each. I'd put it up against the ROI on any game.

Was it designed with certain locations in mind or was it planned from operator request?

It was a combination. We felt it was a viable, good product for the operator. And also we had an inventory of *Punch Out!* cabinets since Nintendo has taken pride in never offering close outs. We are now using them for *Play Choice-10.* So we felt we had a product that helped the operator and helped us use our inventory. As far as locations, I know there are arcades that have them that are doing very well. It is a great game for a novice player because with the timer he will generally get more time for his quarter than if he played a particular game with lives. If you remember the games from way back, players bought time and could get bonus time. Some operators complained about long playing times on games the players could stay on for a half an hour if not longer. Of course, most of the time when people could play those long game times, they put a lot of quarters in them to learn. I sure don't think it hurt *Pac-Man* or *Asteroids.* But since the operators don't like it, we are trying to give the player as much enjoyment as we can for a quarter. If he picks one of the games from the menu and doesn't like it, he can go on to another one. Another attractive feature on *Play Choice-10* is the operator options. He sets his own play time anywhere from 12 minutes to two minutes. On top of that he can set bonus play up to 100 percent. For example, he may set the game for three minutes for a quarter but if a player puts in two quarters he can get seven and a half minutes of play time.

But there are a lot of VS systems out there. Are you still developing games for them?

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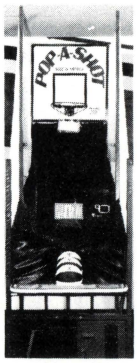

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We are and will continue to support those systems. And though, the emphasis is on *Play Choice* there will still be product for the VS. We will be licensing others to develop software for the VS. The latest deal we made was with Data East. We also have Capcom, Tecmo, Sun Corp., Coin-It, Jaleco, and Rare. We are actively generating licensees because we want to support the VS system with quality software.

Are companies going to just be developing the games for Nintendo or are they going to market them too?

Some we will sell and some we won't. Nintendo marketed *Gradius* and *Goonies* developed by Konami and *Slalom* by Rare Coin-It. But *Sky Kid* developed by Namco, licensed by Sun Corp. for the VS will be sold by Sun. So there is no set rule. If we had our druthers, we would like to market all the games for obvious reasons--I think we have the best sales team in the entire industry. I've got five regional sales managers traveling constantly meeting operators. They are not your normal regional managers who go out and glad-hand the distributor principals. They go out and travel the territory with the distributor's salesmen. Operators normally only have two chances to speak to factory representatives, at the national trade shows, or the distributor showroom. But then there are usually so many people around the operator isn't given the attention he would like. The way our salesmen work, they are sitting across from the operator at his own desk and we can give that operator all the attention he wants. We know where the more than 70,000 VS systems are and we know many of the operators personally. We do have advantages the other manufacturers don't have.

How important do you feel it is to keep in close touch with the operator?

We feel that it is the most important thing. He knows what he wants and we have an obligation to listen. There's really no other way to have that contact that is vital. If some operators had their druthers, I'm sorry to say they would never buy another piece of equipment. They would run what he has on their routes forever. So we want operators to make money and buy new product. By traveling with our distributors' salesmen, we can explain our product better than anyone and it is an advantage for us to be able to make contact with the operators through our distributors.

I'm sure this is the dreaded question, but has Nintendo been getting flack about the consumer division?

When we make a decision we look at the consequences or effects on Nintendo, the distributor, the operator, and the industry. We try to take all into account, although I know today many will disagree with that statement mainly because of our consumer division. There are some people who feel that it is dejavu when they compare us with Atari. They feel that Nintendo is going to destroy the coin-operated games industry. We are not. There is a point where home games could hurt the coin-op games. Atari, Coleco and Mattel had at least a 25 percent home penetration years ago. And maybe that was close to the point where it could hurt coin-op. But Nintendo will have no where even close to that kind of penetration. I think we all got complacent back in the early 80s and that's why we lost the player, not just because someone offered games for the home. Many of the teenagers who were strong video game players started thinking the games were passe, not the in thing anymore. But that was because we weren't offering them quality entertainment. Now those players are getting excited by home game advertising and are now going back out to see what is available in coin-op. If quality games are available in the home, they're wondering what's available in the arcades. I believe the high quality home games Nintendo is offering and the advertising it's doing is helping to bring video games back to the attention of the player. We are introducing a new generation of players to video games via home versions.

The big question during Atari's home game popularity was whether or not the home games hurt arcades, or whether it brought favorable attention. Is that still a controversy?

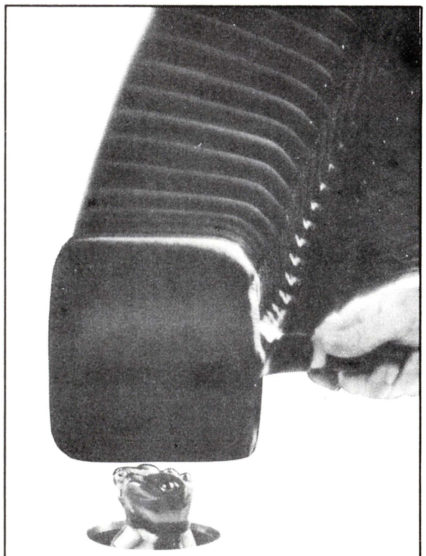
I'm not saying that home games don't take a few quarters out of arcades, but there will never be that peer gratification at home that players get in an arcade. Who's going to see you get that high score at home? Are you going to call your sister in to see it? Right now I think its positive. No one has been able to give us proof either way. No one has been able to prove we are helping the coin industry. Nor have our adversaries been able to prove that we have hurt it. However, we have had some informal feedback from operators in areas where advertising for the home games is seen and they tell us they have seen an increase in earnings. Of course, they can't prove it's because of the consumer advertising but they can't say it isn't either. But, it is up to the manufacturers to make quality games to entice players back to the arcades and keep them there.

Back then the main complaint and concern was that the home version was coming out at the same time or just a short time after the coin op version was introduced. What about now?

I agree when operators were paying $2,500 or $3,000 for a dedicated game, in some cases even a year leadtime is not good enough. But right now, with our product for example, operators are not spending a fraction of that but are making money. And some of those products they're making money with were consumer products first. A perfect example is *Super Mario Bros.* That was 100 percent consumer, it was never even made as a coin-op in Japan. If we would have had *Play Choice-10* then, we would have had *Super Mario Bros.* out four months sooner because we would not have had to tweak it or worry about game times. It was a long playing game. But when buying on a per minute or three minutes for a quarter it opens a lot of avenues. We see *Play Choice-10* giving us unlimited capabilities as far as the type of games--role playing, adventure--even games where a player will be able to play up to a certain point and when the time runs out will be able to continue from where he left off. It may even allow players to have a password allowing them to return to the game later, even days later, and continue play where he left off. We are looking at some of that technology. The types and varieties of games will greatly outnumber any other factory. We already have in Japan over 300 titles. That's why we can sell it so cheap. With our consumer business in Japan, where we introduce a cartridge and sell four-hundred thousand or a million of it, the entire R & D is paid for. Although they may not want to believe it, operators in the U.S. are reaping the benefits of the consumer game because the consumer is paying for the R & D not the operators.

Have you been pretty happy with the product coming out of Nintendo?

I feel in most cases the games have been excellent. I would like for every game to be an *Excite Bike* or a *Super Mario.* Sorry to say its almost impossible. We have learned some valuable lessons with some of the



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mediocre games we introduced that were real stinkers. At the time we felt we were pressed to the wall to bring out software for the VS system. That was our mistake. We shouldn't have introduced anything less than really good software.

But do you think that since the software for the VS system isn't that expensive, operators probably didn't lose money on even the so-called stinkers?

If an operator on a 50/50 split made $400 on those games, he came out OK. Even though we felt bad about putting out product that turned out to be poor, in the worst case operators broke even. You can't say that about most games. If I make a mistake and buy a $2,500 game that turns out to be a dog, I can say I lost money. But I think with ours, at least operators got their investment back. I know we're not in business to break even but if I knew my worst risk was to break even, I would feel very comfortable because more times than not, I will be on the profit side. I'm sorry there will never be an *Out Run* on the VS or *Play Choice-10.* It is just not possible to have that quality of game but you are also not paying those high prices. I love to see those games, though, because when operators make money, you can be sure they will spend some of those profits to buy my games. So even though it is stiff competition for me, it helps me, too.

Have you noticed a difference in operators' buying habits since there seems to be an upturn in the industry? Are they buying more product?

I think the operator today is better off today than he has ever been. The product out there is good. He doesn't have as much competition which, if anything, may hurt manufacturers because operators are not forced to buy more games. But he actually has been spending more money on big ticket items, *Out Run, Gauntlet, 720 Degrees,* and *Danger Zone.* Many games are over $3,000 and operators are wiling to buy them when only a year ago all they wanted were kits. Today kits are very tough sales. There are fewer kits being sold because operators are putting a lot of their money into large ticket items that will bring in more money. The kit manufacturers may be taking a back seat now, but a good quality kit will be sold. And, as I said earlier, the more money the operator makes the better off we all are. However, I might add that I don't necessarily think the biggest collections are always best. *Out Run* may make $500 but five *Super Mario Bros.* or two *Double Dribbles* may make the same $500 but satisfy more locations with less output.

Although you aren't in the crane business, have you noticed an effect on video games as operators invest more money into cranes?

I can't say they are gaming devices but I see them many times subsidizing the amusement games like the gaming devices do in Europe. Because they are making the bulk of their money on the gaming devices in Europe, they are able to buy more videos; consequently the gaming devices are subsidizing the video games. I think to a certain extent the cranes are helping American operators in the same way. Cranes are making good money for operators and have been a fantastic buy. What the operator has to watch is how he operates them. There have been instances where locations have been shut down and cranes picked up because they have been run illegally. I've seen cranes stocked with plastic eggs with $20 bills inside. That's the worst thing in the world an operator could do. So, again, we have to start policing ourselves or the one rotten apple will spoil the whole barrel. Just as we were concerned about gray area

games a few years ago, we should be just as concerned about cranes. The community leaders will take the easy way out and just ban everything. I think cranes are good but the operator could turn out to be his own worst enemy if he doesn't operate them properly. He could put himself in jeopardy along with other operators.

Since we never know which company is going to have the next hit, distributors seem to be in a position of having to represent them all. What do you think about that as a manufacturer?

Like there are no two factories alike, there are no two distributors alike. There are some distributors who are more capable financially or sales wise; one may have a strong operator following and the confidence from them. These distributors can handle and represent everyone. But they are few and far between. There are far more of those who can't handle everybody.

How many are there who you feel could handle everybody?

I'd say there are probably less than a dozen that I feel are capable of handling the full gambit of everyone's lines. The distributor must have the financial where-with-all to help the operator. It needs the expertise in the service department to be able to handle many problems. But this is another reason why we need our regional sales managers. We, many times, are taking pressure off the distributor by going out and promoting our product. Many distributors may sell off a shopping list, telling their operator-customers that they have such and such, and this video, this pin, this music, this vending. The customer says which game he wants, the distributor says thanks alot and the operator is gone. As soon as the distributor gets a sale he's happy and forgets everything else. That's why we have run some sales seminars for the distributors' salesmen. They are not just on Nintendo product but it is done in such a manner that the techniques could be used in selling anyone's product. We believe that the more professional the sales people are, the better it will help the operator. He's like anyone else, he needs to be sold. And I'd like to think he is being sold on good product. A story I've told many times is: If I was an operator, I would never buy a piece of equipment on my own. I would go into the distributorship and hopefully have enough report that I could say John, I need a game for that convenience store on the corner of 11th and Main, I need another game for Joe's bar, and I need two games for this other location. My distributor should know me and my route well enough that he will sell me the right games. I shouldn't have to pick them out. I don't have the crystal ball.

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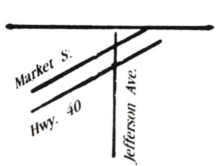

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"I hate the expression, but he's gone back to basics where he is working with his locations, he's rotating games, he's trying to keep abreast of what the location is doing, he's tracking his earnings, and right on down the line. It all adds up to operating his business much more professionally."

He's the one dealing with the factory, he's the one who should be getting the test results, he's the one who should be testing the product himself because we've always said that all product is not universal. Sure, the factories test product, but it should also be the distributor's responsibility to test that product again in his marketplace and share those results with his operators. He should advise the operator on what he should buy and if he makes a mistake the first time, well, we all make mistakes. If he makes a mistake the second time in selling operators bad equipment, then he should be questioned. The third or fourth time, I'm going to the next distributor. Operators must have confidence in their distributor. And a lot of the responsibility falls back on the manufacturer because if we come up with bad games, we do what we have to to sell it to the distributor and we can't expect him to eat those games. So he then has to sell them to his operators. So if the factory forces product onto the distributor, the distributor is going to have to force bad product onto the operator and that hurts everyone. So our responsibility is to only sell hot games. But, as we all know, that is not going to happen. There will always be games that don't do as well as we hoped and all factories will have their fair share of losses, but we must do our best to limit those.

As a manufacturer, you of course are checking out other manufacturers' equipment. What do you think about the product that has been coming out lately?

I think in most instances it is good product. However, in the past operators would buy 20 *Pac-Mans*, 30 *Asteroids*, and 20 of whatever is new. Now he is buying in twos and threes. I hate the expression, but he's gone back to basics where he is working with his locations, he's rotating games, he's trying to keep abreast of what the location is doing, he's tracking his earnings, and right on down the line. It all adds up to operating his business much more professionally. He's, therefore, able to buy more product. Of course, he just can't buy every game out there so he must pick and choose. This is where the operator really needs the expertise of the distributor for making the guess about what to buy. This is the only industry, besides the movies, that has a built in barometer. Operators open that cashbox every week every day and the cashbox tells whether he was lied to. The operator can't afford to have his distributor lie to him.

But there are also operators who don't rotate games or maintain them, etc. Does the distributor get blamed sometimes when it really isn't his fault?

It's a combination. Many distributors offer services such as doing conversions for operators. But there will always be bad operators, just like there will be bad distributors and manufacturers. But the fewer there are the better off we all are. The operator has to put himself in the position of the player. If the game looks terrible, I don't care what game it is, it will not be played. The operator has a responsibility to his locations and whenever he shirks his responsibility he not only hurts himself, but the industry in general.

How do you feel about the industry standardization?

I have been involved in it since the beginning and was on the first panel. Over the years it has been a single man's crusade namely through Todd Erickson. Todd is a very respected operator and in previous companies I used Todd's input quite often. And the way I feel is if it can be done without limiting the creativity of the manufacturers and without putting substantial additional dollars into the cost of equipment and ultimately if it can save the operator money, then I'm all for it. Again, it goes back to the more profitable the operator is the better off we all are. You can't expect factories to throw away inventory. So if we can start it when we run out of locks or buttons or whatever, we will try. Since we are manufacturing games in Japan we have a big inventory of parts. Most of the suggestions so far are on the cabinet--standard size locks, on/off switches in the same place, and things like that.

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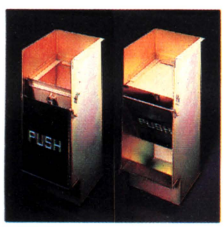
10. 4-sided viewing (optional).
11. Gumball dispenser (optional).

Left: Redemption Chute
Right: Casablanca Model
Bottom: Monster Model



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Now that you're in New Orleans...

BY BONNIE THEARD

You have succumb to the scent of magnolias, the lure of aromatic and spicy Creole dishes, the rhythmic sounds of jazz and the promise of non-stop, all night entertainment in a city that really knows how to throw a party. You are in New Orleans, a city steeped in French and Spanish traditions, a city waiting to show you a good time.

You are also at the second annual American Coin Machine Exposition (ACME). Most probably you are staying at a hotel in the central business district (CBD) adjacent to the Rivergate, host center for ACME.

You may have already enjoyed the "Tour the French Quarter with Valerie and Bonnie" article in our February issue. Before you travel in that direction you may want to know what is offered right next door to the Rivergate or your hotel. Numerous shopping, dining and sight-seeing opportunities are within walking distance of the exposition site.

A tour of the **Superdome** is in order. The structure dominates the city's skyline and is home to the New Orleans Saints football team, the Sugar Bowl football classic, Tulane football, basketball tournaments, rock concerts, and several Super Bowl championships (Super Bowl XXIV is scheduled here for 1990). The Republican National Convention will be conducted in the dome in the summer of 1988. Located on the business thoroughfare of Poydras Street, the Superdome offers daily tours from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Shopping spree

There are more chances than you may like to go on a shopping spree in New Orleans. The newest shopping complex is the **Riverwalk**, opened just seven months ago. It houses an extensive array of specialty shops, restaurants and cafes that extends from the foot of Poydras Street along the Mississippi River to the Convention Center. Shops include everything from the Banana Republic clothing store to Yvonne LaFleur's custom millinery, silk dresses and fine sportswear. There you will also find Abercrombie and Fitch, Evans Creole Candy, Whole Foods Wine Bar, The Fudge Factory, The Kite Loft, plus numerous cart merchants selling toys, fancy picture frames and almost anything else you can imagine. The food court, Bon Fete, is located on

A festive atmosphere is synonymous with the city; here crowds enjoy music in Dutch Alley by the French Market.

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the upper level and offers seafood, Chinese cuisine, hamburgers, desserts and more for a quick bite, all enjoyed while viewing the Mississippi River.

Canal Place at 333 Canal Street, one block from the River, has a collection of over 40 elegant shops. **The Jackson Brewery** at Jackson Square and the Mississippi River is a riverfront marketplace featuring arts, crafts, collectibles, unusual shops and cafes.

The New Orleans skyline with crescent-shaped Mississippi River turn visible. The Superdome is on the right.

The French Market shopping area begins after the Cafe du Monde at St. Ann and Decatur Streets (across from Jackson Square) and curves down N. Peters Street. Contemporary shops, an open air market and cafes offering a full range of local cuisine are all found at the Market.

Riverbend in the uptown section of the city at the end of St. Charles Avenue features variety stores housed in Creole cottages for shopping in a friendly neighborhood setting. You can even take the streetcar there if you wish. Also in that area is **Uptown Square**, a two-tiered shopping center interestingly designed with interior patios. Here you will find fine apparel shops for men, women and children, accessory shops, homemade cookie shop, plus a cinema. Located at River Road and Broadway, it is just a few blocks down from the Audubon Zoo.

Suburban shopping malls are also plentiful. Most unusual, and newest among them is**The Esplanade** that breaks from traditional shopping mall style and features 250 stores amid towering arches, two-story skylighted colonnades, bubbling fountains and food court offering pizza, burgers, oriental dishes and more. There's also a Cafe du Monde with famous New Orleans beignets and cafe au lait. To reach this center take Interstate 10 West to the Williams Blvd. exit, take a right on Williams and continue to W. Esplanade Ave., then turn left.

No shopping spree would be complete without a romantic new fragrance from one of the city's perfumeries. The **Bourbon French Perfume Co.**, 318 Royal Street, is the oldest local perfumery. Choose from over 100 fragrances or have one custom blended to match your body chemistry. At **Hove Parfumeur, Ltd.**, 824 Royal Street, try the six perfume sampler, or select from bath oils, sachets, soaps and potpourri; also colognes for men. If you are in The Jackson Brewery shopping complex stop by **La Belle Epoque Parfumerie**.

The Camellia Grill, a local landmark in the Riverbend area.

Dining out

It's difficult to begin recommending places to dine out in New Orleans--the list is endless. Known as a culinary capital, New Orleans offers delectable local dishes and traditional fare. *Play Meter's* staff huddled for an exchange of favorite spots and here are the results:

For publisher Carol Lally her first thoughts turned to fried seafood featured at **Bozo's** in Metairie (3117 21st Street, 831-8666); and charcoal grilled hamburgers served in a very casual setting at **Ruby Red's** (435 Esplanade Ave. at the end of the French Quarter, 945-1167).

Editor Valerie Cognevich likes **Copeland's** (two suburban restaurants and one uptown location at 4338 St. Charles Ave, 897-2325) a "fancy place without fancy prices," and they make a wonderful Long Island Iced Tea, and **Ralph & Kacoos** seafood restaurant (519 Tolouse Street, 522-5226; and 601 Veterans Memorial Blvd. in Metairie, 831-3177). Also, for Italian cuisine on a budget try **Mama Rosa's Little Slice of Italy** (616 N. Rampart Street, 523-5546). Our new advertising

director, Jim Miller, recommends **Kolb's** German restaurant (125 St. Charles Ave., 522-8278) and **Charlie's Steak House** (4510 Dryades, 895-9705). He suggests "be hungry" for both since portions are large and prices reasonable.

Margret Vincent, graphics designer, advises trying the fried chicken at **Buster Holmes Restaurant & Bar** (721 Burgundy, 561-9375; or in The Jax Brewery, 524-5234) and the neighborhood atmosphere of the **Camellia Grill** (626 S. Carrollton Ave., 866-9573), a colorful local eating spot with all counter seating. Watch omelettes, waffles, super-stacked sandwiches and hamburgers being prepared right before you. Try a "freeze" for your beverage. This is a good spot for late evening or for breakfast any time of day.

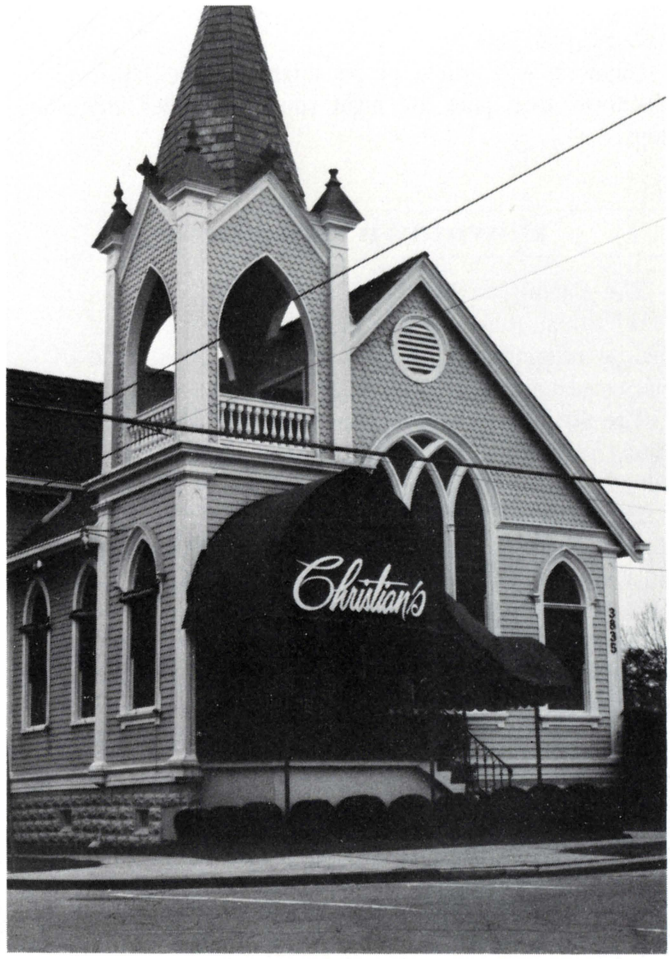
Renee Pierson, circulation manager, recently enjoyed dinner at the new **Brigtsen's** (723 Dante Street in the Riverbend shopping area, 861-7610) that features a limited menu of veal, beef, rabbit and fish. Reservations are a must, taken for parties up to a maximum of six. The atmosphere is homey in the 17-table dining room.

Lenore Bramblett of accounting recommends **Christian's** (3835 Iberville, 482-4924) for elegantly served French and Creole cuisine, and **Vera Cruz** (1141 Decatur, 561-8081) for good Mexican food in a casual atmosphere.

Sally Blakemore, art director, enjoys the **Bon Ton Cafe** (401 Magazine Street, 523-8419) a gathering spot for local businessmen that offers Cajun and Creole dishes derived from family recipes.

Rusty Storbeck, associate editor, highly recommends **Mother's Restaurant** (401 Poydras Street, 523-9656) a local landmark featuring plate lunches and the best po-boy sandwiches. Try the ferdi special or turkey ferdi special (ham and roast beef; or turkey, ham and roast beef).

My choices are **La Riviera** (4506 Shores Drive in Metairie, 888-6238) for Italian foods--try the oyster-artichoke soup and eggplant parmesan; and **Sportsman's Paradise Restaurant & Oyster Bar** (7360 W. Roadway in the West End Park area, 282-3415) where



(above)Christian's Restaurant on Iberville Street.(below, left) A view of Riverwalk shops facing the Mississippi and leading up to Bon Fete, the food court. (below, right) The Riverwalk's food court offers a wide variety. Enjoy your selection at tables facing the river.

broiled seafood is a specialty and the setting is a glass-enclosed patio.

Following is a listing of restaurants in the CBD and downtown area, plus late night spots and other interesting stops.

Downtown restaurants

The Caribbean Room (2031 St. Charles Ave. in the Pontchartrain Hotel, 524-3178). A time-honored local favorite offering rack of lamb, prime rib, steak, and of course, seafood. Try Trout Eugene and Mile High Pie.

The Grill Room (300 Gravier in the Windsor Court Hotel, 522-1992). New Orleans cuisine with an international flair.

Delmonico's (1300 St. Charles Ave., 525-4937). A popular family-owned establishment with consistently satisfying Creole food and homemade desserts, especially coconut cream pie.

Henri's (614 Canal Street in the Hotel Meridien, 527-6708). Among the specialties are chicken paillards and filet mignon of venison.

Flagon's (3222 Magazine, 895-6471). A wine bar and bistro with over 40 fine wines by glass and 350 vintages by the bottle to compliment dinners of duck breast in cabernet sauce, redfish in parchment or grilled shrimp with tasso pasta.

Winston's (2 Poydras Street in the New Orleans Hilton Hotel, 561-0500). New Orleans classics and a menu of changing selections.

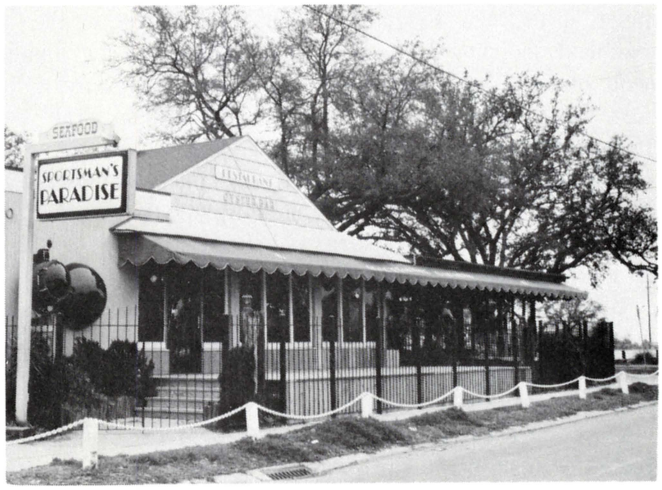
The Versailles (2100 St. Charles Ave., 524-2535). French Creole specialties.

Saffron (500 Canal Street at the Sheraton New Orleans, 525-2500). Continental cuisine.

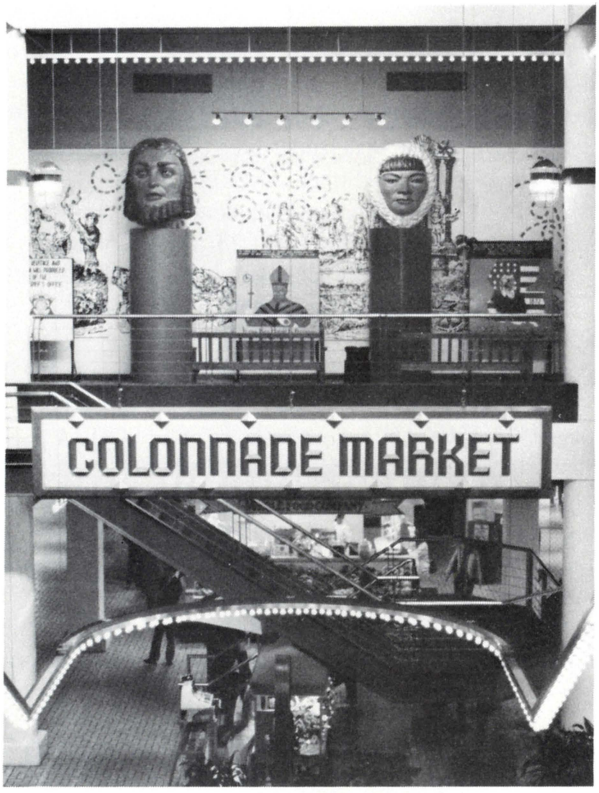
The Pearl Restaurant &-f4- Oyster Bar (119 St. Charles Ave., 525-2901). Long a businessman's favorite. Tempting whole roast beefs and baked hams adorn the window. Fuddrucker's (401 Tchoupitoulas in the business district, 529-1781). Taste the ultimate hamburger in an old-time setting.

French Quarter restaurants

Arnaud's (813 Bienville, 523-5433). Open seven days a week. French Creole cuisine



(top) Mother's Restaurant, popular businessman's stop. (above) Sportsman's Paradise seafood restaurant in West End Park. (below) Cafe du Monde in the French Quarter, home of famous beignets and cafe au lait.



(above) Entrance to Riverwalk's lower level Colonnade Market. (below) Courtyard dining is part of Court of Two Sisters' charm.

featured and a jazz brunch on Sunday.

Vieux Carre (241 Bourbon 524-0114). French, Creole and Cajun cuisine; reservations preferred.

Rib Room (621 St. Louis in the Royal Orleans Hotel, 529-7045). Prime rib a house specialty.

Bull's Corner (320 Decatur, 529-1350). Specializes in Cajun-American cuisine including blackened redfish and barbecue shrimp.

Visko's (620 Decatur in The Jax Brewery, 522-2082). Fresh Louisiana oysters, spicy crawfish, sauteed fish and fried shrimp.

The Court of Two Sisters (613 Royal, 522-7261). A colorful courtyard restaurant for dinner or lunch with daily brunch buffet.

Mike Anderson's Seafood Restaurant & Oyster Bar (215 Bourbon, 524-3884). Specializing in fresh seafood--broiled, char-broiled and boiled.

Trey Yuen (620 Decatur on the fourth level of The Jax Brewery, 588-9354). When Chinese cuisine is all that will do.

Cafe S'bisa (1011 Decatur, 561-8354). Traditional and nouvelle Creole cuisine and open charcoal grill; piano nightly.

D.H. Holmes Cafeteria & Outback Deli (220 Dauphine corner Iberville, 561-6141 for cafeteria, 561-6886 for deli). The cafeteria is a very reasonably priced spot for breakfast, lunch and dinner; family oriented. The Outback Deli has overstuffed sandwiches, fresh baked croissants and more.

Fast food

When your children (or you) long for a familiar fast food name nearby, you'll find it in the downtown area.

Wendy's, 509 Canal Street across from the Sheraton, 522-1981.

Burger King, 623 Canal Street, 524-4147; and 144 University Place in the CBD, 524-8110.

Popeye's Fried Chicken, 621 Canal Street, 561-1021.

McDonald's, 934 Canal Street, 524-3116.

That's entertainment!

The Blue Room (on University Place at the Fairmont Hotel, 529-4744). A room that has always hosted "name" entertainment; two shows nightly.

Pete Fountain's Night Club (2 Poydras at the New Orleans Hilton Hotel, 523-4374). Featuring the famous clarinetist Tuesday thru Saturday 10 p.m. until.

Preservation Hall (726 St. Peter, 523-8939). Home of the jazz greats.

Pat O'Brien's (716 St. Peter, 525-4823). Originator of the "hurricane", a famous New Orleans drink.

Lulu White's Mahogany Hall (309 Bourbon, 525-5595) home of the Dukes of Dixieland; three shows nightly.

RiverView (555 Canal Street, 581-1000) atop the New Orleans Marriott Hotel, live entertainment every evening; also Sunday champagne brunch with Dixieland band.

Le Jazz Meridien (614 Canal Street in the Meridien Hotel, 525-6500). A different jazz group every Tuesday-Saturday night.

Brewhouse Cafe & Bar on the second level of The Jax Brewery (525-9843) for vocal song stylists and trumpet.

Georgie Porgie's (601 Loyola Ave., 566-0000). A restaurant and theatre club featuring 50's music, jazz, blues and disco.

Storyville Jazz Hall (1104 Decatur in the French Market area, 525-8199). Traditional jazz starting at 8 p.m.; contemporary music from 12:30 a.m. until.

Snug Harbor Jazz Club & Restaurant (625 Frenchman in the Faubourg Marigny section behind the French Quarter,

Bookbinders is an eye-catching part of the food court at the Riverwalk.

949-0696). Contemporary jazz, casual attire, seating on two levels.

Cultural

New Orleans Symphony (Orpheum Theatre, 129 University Place, 525-0500), under the direction of Maxim Shostakovich.

Le Petit Theatre (616 St. Peter in the French Quarter, 522-2081).

New Orleans Opera Association (Theatre of the Performing Arts, 801 N. Rampart 529-2278).

Museums

New Orleans Museum of Art in City Park has a varied collection considered to be among the finest in the south (488-2631).

Confederate Memorial Museum (929 Camp Street, 523-4522) one of the largest collections of memorabilia from Civil War days.

Musee Conti Historical Wax Museum (917 Conti Street, 525-2605) houses costume exhibits of Louisiana legends and Mardi Gras.

Voodoo Museum (724 Dumaine Street, 523-7685) a combination museum and store.

Historic New Orleans Collection (533 Royal Street, 523-4662) providing a view of colonial days to the mid-19th century in maps, paintings and rare books.

Louisiana State Museum at Jackson Square (568-6968). Includes eight historical buildings, among them the Cabildo, Pontalba buildings, the Presbytere and the U.S. Mint.

Ripley's Believe It Or Not (501 Bourbon Street, 529-5131) a collection of strange and unusual objects from all over the world; also wax figures, voodoo and witchcraft exhibits.

Uptown Square shopping center is designed on two levels around inner courtyards.

Delmonico's Restaurant on St. Charles Ave.

An interior view of Uptown Square that features apparel and specialty stores for men, women and children; plus a double-screen cinema and cookie factory. Look for names like Papagallo shoes and accessories, and Ralph Lauren fashions for men.

You know you're at home in New Orleans when...

You not only say Tchoupitoulas, but you can say it without laughing.

You begin to believe that purple, green, and gold look good together and will even eat things those colors.

You know exactly what you are going to eat next Monday – and the Monday after that – and after that.

You are no longer shocked when someone advises you to "suck the heads and eat the tails."

You're not afraid when someone wants to "axe" you.

You consider it an honor on certain occasions to have cabbages or coconuts thrown at you.

You describe items of a certain hue as K&B purple

You get on a bus marked "Cemeteries" without a second thought.

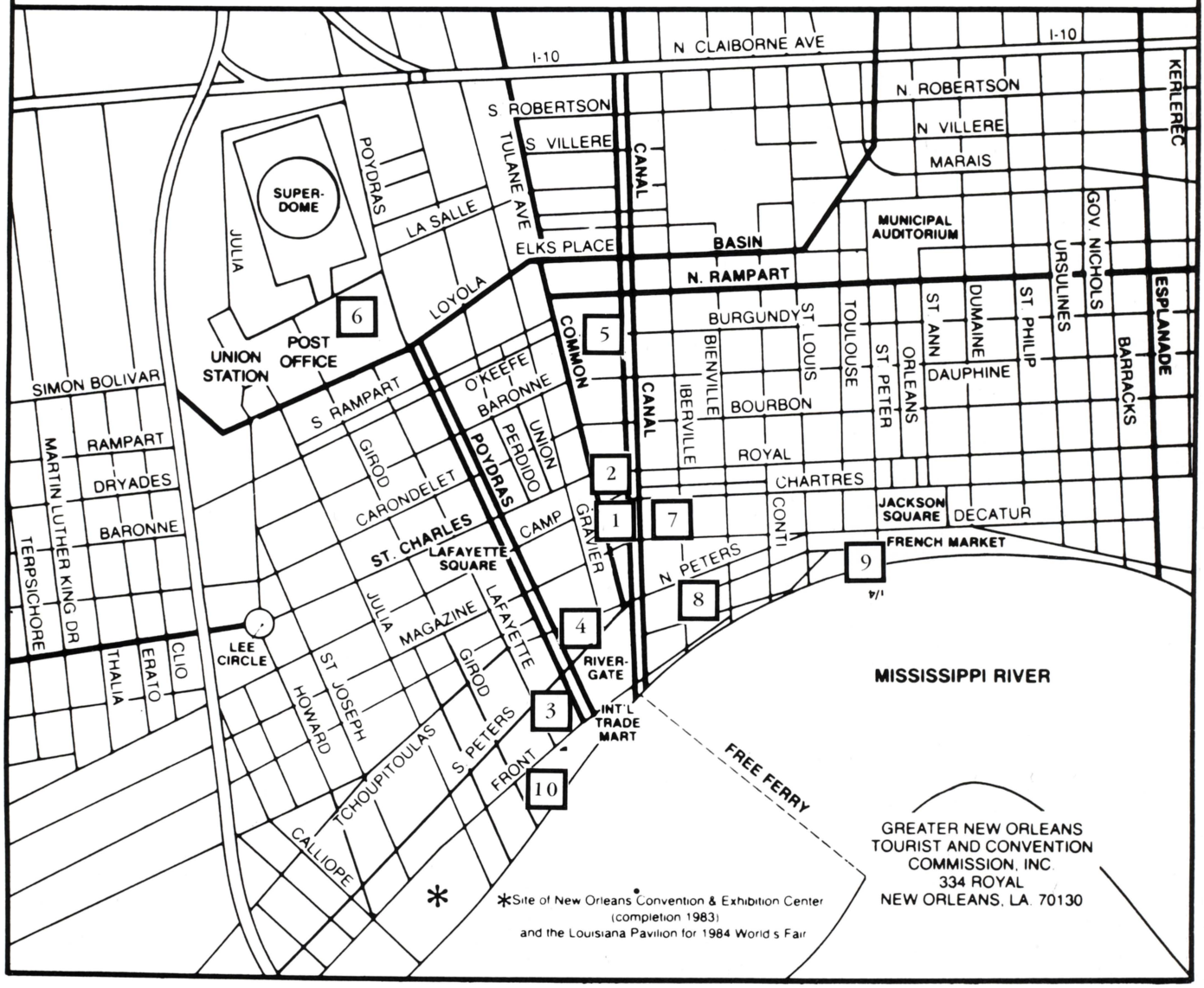
You have discovered that those four-inch-long cockroaches can fly, but have decided to retain your sanity anyway.

You do not think about spinach when you see the word "Popeye's".

You have to make groceries.

You know that living anywhere else would be very sad.

Map of the Central Business District and the French Quarter



1. Sheraton New Orleans Hotel & Towers

2. Hotel Meridien

3. New Orleans Hilton

4. Holiday Inn Crowne Plaza

5. Fairmont Hotel

6. Hyatt Regency New Orleans

7. New Orleans Marriott Hotel

8. Westin Canal Place

9. The Jax Brewery

10. The Riverwalk

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NEW ORLEANS, WITH OR WITHOUT WHEELS

BY RUSTY STORBECK

They don't call New Orleans a tourist town for nothing. Few places can rival the diversity of attractions it offers. Looking for the exotic? It's here. Looking for the historic? It's here. Looking for charm and fun and just plain old good weather while the rest of the country is still iced away in a winter setting? They're all here. At the same time.

But as much as anything else, what makes New Orleans unique is the accessibility of its attractions. Much of what there is to see is centrally located, and if it's not, there's always a carriage, or a boat, or a bus that's not only ready and willing to take you there, but is often as much of an attraction as the attraction you're headed for. New Orleans, is truly a city of tours--you can even get a seaplane that'll land you in a bayou--and that fact renders it what you might call a "user-friendly" tourist town, where you're not stranded if you're on foot and where an automobile, as a local might put it, is "lagniappe."

What follows is a guide to New Orleans and vicinity that you can use with or without wheels.

FRENCH QUARTER

By far, the most famous attraction New Orleans has to offer is the French Quarter (also known as the Vieux Carre), the city's oldest neighborhood and one that's best explored on foot. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the French Quarter has homes and buildings that date from as far back as the early 1700s. Its Old World feeling springs from the narrow streets, the old storefronts, the Spanish architecture, and the aura of places like the LaLaurie House, which is said to be haunted, and St. Louis Cathedral, the oldest cathedral in the United States.

Although the French Quarter is a delight to discover on your own, various agencies and enterprising individuals offer tours that range from the Tourist and Convention Commission's excellent self-guided walking tours, which includes 37 stops, to the Heritage Tours, whose guide, Kenneth Holditch, will take you to the haunts of literary figures like Tennessee Williams, William Faulkner, and Mark Twain. One company offers tours that are "tailored to your needs." Some of the most informative--and entertaining--tours, however, are those given at no charge by the National Park Service, whose gazebos are located on the river side of Decatur street.

In fact, it's the National Park Service that leads what may be the best tour of one of New Orleans' truly unique attractions--its above-ground cemeteries.

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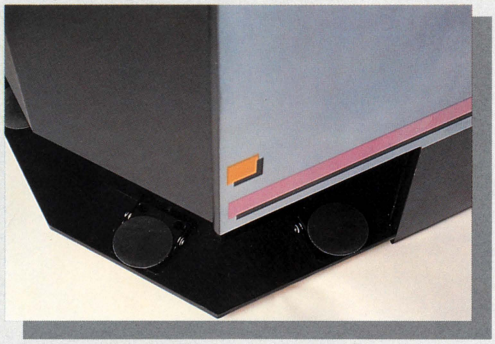

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Called the "Cities of the Dead," the Park Service tour is conducted in the city's oldest existing cemetery, the St. Louis Cemetery, No. 1. The Rangers are well-versed in their history, and they'll take you to the gravesites of figures like Etienne Bore, the first mayor of New Orleans, and Marie Laveau, the voodoo queen, whose tomb is covered with chalked X's that are said to bring good luck.

While you're in the Quarter, you may also want to visit an exhibit that's not always around, the Dinamation exhibit on the Lower Bienville Wharf. The exhibit, which runs through May 30, consists of seven gigantic dinosaurs and a six-foot-tall pteranodon, all computer-operated and pneumatic-powered to mimic the movements of the actual creatures that roamed the earth 175 million years ago.

At some point during your stay, a trip to the top of the World Trade Center will be worthwhile. Located on Canal Street at the river, the building affords a fascinating panorama of both sides of the Mississippi. Two levels of viewing are available to the public: the Observation Deck, on the 31st floor, and the Top of the Mart, on the 33rd floor. The Top of the Mart is a revolving lounge that makes one revolution every 90 minutes. It's from the eagle's perch atop the World Trade Center that you'll be able to see why New Orleans, nestled in the curve of the Mississippi, is called the Crescent City. And if you look upriver, to a point about four miles away as the crow flies, you'll be able to spot another of New Orleans major attractions--Audubon Park and Zoological Garden.

AUDUBON PARK

The park, which recently celebrated its 100th anniversary, was designed by John Charles Olmsted, nephew of Frederick Law Olmstead, whose landscaping firm was also responsible for planning New York City's Central Park. The 150 acres between St. Charles Avenue and Magazine Street is a natural setting dominated by live oaks, a lagoon and

Louisiana's countryside is marked by impressive plantation homes, among them San Francisco Plantation, built in 1854. A national historic landmark, it combines ironwork, wooden balustrades and remarkable frescos.

The famous New Orleans streetcar travels down St. Charles Avenue.

Iron lace balconies are indicative of French Quarter architecture. Here oak leaves intertwine with acorns.

wide-open fields. The 190 acres between magazine Street and the levee has room for tennis courts, riding stables, a natatorium, shaded picnic areas, a miniature train, and the award-winning zoo that provides natural habitats for its growing variety of animals.

Getting to the park may be as much fun as touring the park itself. Among your alternatives are the St. Charles streetcar, the Magazine Street bus, and the paddlewheeling Cotton Blossom. The oldest continuously operating street railroad in the world, the St. Charles streetcar will take you past Lee Circle, where the 16 1/2-foot, 7,000-pound statue of Confederate General Robert E. Lee stands high above the street, facing north, some storytellers say, because "you never turn your back on the enemy."

Several blocks past the Circle, beginning at Jackson Avenue and ending at Louisiana Avenue, is the Garden District, an elegant residential section of New Orleans that was one of the last sanctuaries of Southern antebellum aristocracy. The magnificent homes are set in vast lawns beneath live oaks, magnolias, and palm trees. The Park Service offers walking tours to the area.

One advantage of taking the Magazine Street bus is that it passes through a district that is replete with antique shops and art galleries. A word of caution, though: although some of the antique shops are conveniently clustered, the art galleries aren't. If you're interested more in art, or even antiques, than you are in the zoo, it's probably better to drive than to ride the bus.

The Cotton Blossom, owned and operated by the New Orleans Steamboat Company, is a sternwheeler that churns its way along the leisurely seven-mile arc of the river between Canal Street and Audubon Landing three times a day. Sailing time is between 45 minutes and an hour each way.

RIVER CRUISES

Riverboats have long been a part of the City's tradition dating back to 1811.

They have regular "packets," or scheduled routes, just as they did more than 100 years ago. The Natchez, famed for its New Orleans to St. Louis race against the Robert E. Lee in 1870, leaves the wharf behind Jackson Brewery twice a day, touring the harbor with as many as 1,600 passengers. It offers a 6:30 p.m. dinner/jazz cruise and, on Saturday nights, a 10 p.m.-midnight moonlight dance cruise. One of the largest of the riverboats, the President, also

Storyland, a children's fantasy land, is one of City Park's special attractions.

The New Orleans Museum of Art, located in City Park, hosts many exhibitions.

sails on Saturday nights, as well as on Sunday afternoons. Recently refitted, the President is a four-deck, side-rigged giant that can carry up to 3,000 passengers.

The Creole Queen, which docks at the Poydras Street Wharf, offers a dinner-and-jazz cruise that boards at 7 p.m. and departs at 8. Passengers dine at a buffet that includes Louisiana specialties like creole gumbo, paddlewheel salad, jambalaya, and red beans and rice with smoked sausage.

Other river cruises are available in the port of New Orleans, although not always on paddleboats. The Louisiana Bayou Cruise, for example, aboard the modern Bayou Jean Lafitte, is a 45-mile excursion that cuts across the Algiers Canal into the Bayou Barataria, the strong hold of the pirate Lafitte, and returns through the Harvey Canal. The Voyageur, which departs from Canal Street, features a morning bayou cruise that visits the Chalmette Battlefield, where Andrew Jackson defeated the British in 1815 in the famous Battle of New Orleans. It then continues on to Lafitte before returning to Canal Street. The afternoon packet is much shorter, essentially a jaunt downriver to the battlefield, where passengers can disembark, and then back.

The Chalmette Battlefield is something of a popular stop for harbor cruises. Even the much larger Creole Queen stops there. Part of the battlefield's draw is the Beauregard House, which was build in 1833 and was the home of Rene Beauregard, the son of the Confederate general, P. G. T. Beauregard.

PLANTATIONS

Were it not for the length of such excursions, steamboat might be the best way to visit River Road plantation homes like Nottoway, Rosedown, San Francisco, Oak Alley, and Houmas House. Companies like Gray Line offer excellent ground-transportation packages that include tours of at least two plantations, plus lunch. The tours are comfortably scheduled, and you do get to see a good bit of the countryside without the distraction of having to keep the vehicle on the road yourself. You may prefer to do the driving yourself and decide which homes you want to see.

On Saturday, March 21 the ACME spouses program will tour both the San Francisco Plantation and Tezcuco Plantation. Lunch in an antebellum atmosphere is included in the tour that departs at 9:00 a.m. and returns at 2:00 p.m.

The marvelously ornate, three-storied San Francisco Plantation, built in 1854, is said to have been Edward Marmillion's "dream of a house that would reflect life's happy memories." It is done in the early Creole style, with the main living room above the ground floor, which houses the dining room and service rooms only.

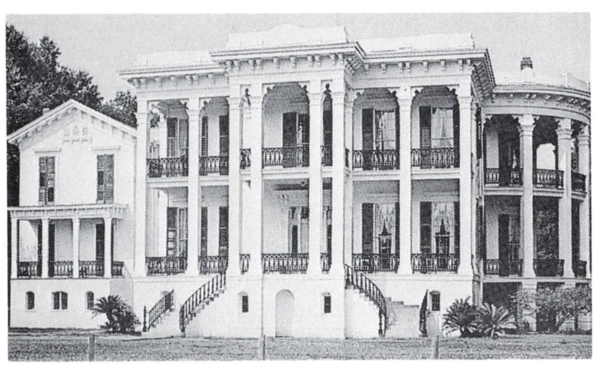
Tezcuco Plantation was built over a five-year period from 1850-1855 for Benjamin Tureaud, a veteran of the Mexican wars. An example of the raised cottage style, the home features ceilings 15 feet high and side galleries of lacy ironwork.

There are at least 17 plantations along the stretch of the Mississippi between New Orleans and Baton Rouge, and it becomes more work than play if you try to see more than two or three in a day. It's also good to know, when you're mapping out your day, that some--like Nottoway, Tezcuco, and Oak Alley--serve lunch. Some also offer overnight or "bed and breakfast" accommodations.

If you have a car, there are, of course, numerous other possibilities for sightseeing. Some recommend striking out along U.S. Highway 90 toward Lafayette. It's the equivalent of a nice drive in the country--in this case Cajun country--and there's plenty to see and do. You'll find museums and zoos; parks for camping and sailing;

Greek Revival architecture is reflected in this Garden District home on Jackson Avenue.

This Prytania Street home in the Garden District is just one of the impressive houses seen throughout the area.



Nottoway Plantation, constructed in 1857 by the nineteenth century architect Henry Howard, breaks from traditional plantation designs. Overnight accommodations are available for a step back in time to the grace and beauty of the antebellum south.

horseback riding; and more plantation homes. Most towns along the way offer swamp tours of one kind or another.

March is a perfect month to visit Long Vue Gardens in the city and the Louisiana Nature and Science Center in the suburbs. If a day at the races is more to your liking, you're in luck--the thoroughbred racing season at the Fair Grounds doesn't end until mid-April.

Mardi Gras came in early March this year, but Mardi Gras World--the Algiers facility where Blaine Kern and Associates make many of the floats and props for the celebration--is always open, with tours available for groups of 20 or more. On that same side of the river, about an hour from New Orleans, is the Barataria unit of the Jean Lafitte National Historical Park. Still in the early stages of development, the park will eventually preserve some 8,600 acres of coastal wetlands. The park offers hiking, canoeing, and fishing.

CITY PARK

City Park is perhaps the most overlooked attraction. There is virtually something for everyone in City Park. The New Orleans Museum of Art has a superb permanent collection that displays outstanding works by masters like Cezanne, Van Gogh, Gauguin, and Picasso. Within walking distance of the museum are the Dueling Oaks, the New Orleans Botanical Garden, Storyland for Children, the turn-of-the-century "Last Carousel," and a miniature railway that chugs its way along a route that skirts scenic lagoons and catches the shade of live oaks that are older than anyone on the train.

Visitors can rent bicycles, boats, and bocce-ball equipment. There are tennis courts, stables, a driving range, and four golf courses. You can even do as one woman, by now famous in the park, has done everyday for the past 20 years--fish for bass. Or you can relax on a park bench and feed the inquisitive ducks who populate the park's lagoons and frequently parade along the bank.

Ah, New Orleans in the spring! Be sure to check in with the tourist information center at 529 St. Ann when you arrive. The people there are friendly and helpful, and if they can't answer your questions, they'll send you to someone who can.

New Orleans, you'll discover, is the kind of place where the more you look, the more you see.

Portions of this article first appeared in the New Orleans Handbook.

They all "axed" for you...

I went on down to the Audubon Zoo
and they all "axed" for you.
They all "axed" for you.
For who?
Well, they even inquired about ya...
I went on down to the Audubon Zoo
and they all "axed" for you.
The monkies "axed", the tigers "axed"
and the elephant "axed" me too.

I went on up to the big ole sky and
they all "axed" for you.
They all "axed" for you.
For who?
Well, they even inquired about ya...
I went on up to the big ole sky and
they all "axed" for you.
The ducks "axed", the eagles "axed"
and the buzzards "axed" me too.

I went on down to the deep blue sea
and they all "axed" for you.
They all "axed" for you.
For who?
Well, they even inquired about ya...
I went on down to the deep blue sea
and they all "axed" for you.
The shark "axed", the whale "axed" and
the barracuda "axed" me too.

They all "axed" for you, they all "axed"
for you.
Everybody's there...wanna go there...
They all "axed" for you.

This is a popular local song you may hear on the radio during your stay in New Orleans. Remember, they're all "axing" for you!

A taste of Creole cookin'

Originally used to describe citizens of mixed French and Spanish heritage, the word Creole (pronounced cree-ole) has come to be associated with New Orleans cuisine. Creole cooking usually starts with sauteed onions, green peppers and tangy tomato sauce as found in crawfish or shrimp etouffee. To sample Creole dishes at home, try one of the recipes below.

Shrimp Jambalaya

2 pounds fresh jumbo shrimp, peeled and deveined
2 tablespoons vegetable oil
1/2 pound of diced seasoned sausage
1/2 cup chopped green onions
2 cloves garlic, chopped
1/4 cup chopped fresh parsley
1 cup chopped green pepper
1 1/2 cups canned tomatoes
1 bay leaf
1 teaspoon crushed thyme
1/8 teaspoon cayenne pepper
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 cup long grain rice (uncooked)
1 l/2 cups water

Use a heavy pot, five-quart dutch oven is fine. Prepare shrimp. Saute sausage in oil about three minutes. Add garlic, onion and pepper. Cook to tender stage. Add parsley, tomatoes, seasonings, rice and water. Stir in thoroughly. Add shrimp. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat and cover. Cook without stirring over a low temperature for 25-30 minutes. Rice should be fluffy. Serves six.

Red Beans and Rice

1 lb. Camellia brand red kidney beans (dry)
1/2 lb. ham chunks
1/2 lb. sliced pork or beef sausage
8-10 cups water
1 large onion, chopped
1 toe garlic, chopped
2 tablespoons celery chopped
2 tablespoons parsley chopped
1 large bay leaf
salt to taste

Rinse and sort beans. Soak overnight in the 8-10 cups water or use the quick cooking method--bring the beans to a boil in the water, cover and let stand for one hour. Render meat in a large skillet and put on the side. Saute onion, garlic, celery and parsley in the meat drippings, then add to beans. Add meat to beans with bay leaf and salt. Cook several hours until beans are tender. Add more water if necessary. Serve over rice with hot cornbread on the side. Serves a crowd. A popular New Orleans dish traditionally prepared on Monday.

Pecan Pralines

1 cup brown sugar, firmly packed
1 cup white sugar
1 cup pecan halves or pieces
1/2 cup cream
2 tablespoons butter

Dissolve sugar in cream and bring to a boil, stirring occasionally. Add the butter and pecans and cook until the syrup reaches the soft ball stage (238 degrees). Cool without disturbing, beat until somewhat thickened but not until it loses its gloss, and drop by tablespoons onto a well greased flat surface or on a waxed paper lined surface. The candy will flatten out into large cakes. Makes 20 pralines.

Billboard TOP TEN

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HOT 100

TITLE	ARTIST Label & Number/Distributing Label
1.LIVIN' ON A PRAYER	BON JOVI MERCURY 888 184-7/POLYGRAM
2.KEEP YOUR HANDS TO YOURSELF	GEORGIA SATELLITES ELEKTRA 7-69502
3.WILL YOU STILL LOVE ME?	CHICAGO WARNER BROS. 7-28512
4.JACOB'S LADDER	HUEY LEWIS & THE NEWS CHRYSALIS 43097
5. TOUCH ME (I WANT YOUR BODY)	SAMANTHA FOX JIVE 1006/RCA
6.YOU GOT IT ALL	THE JETS MCA 52968
7.BALLERINA GIRL	LIONEL RICHIE MOTOWN 1873
8.OPEN YOUR HEART	MADONNA SIRE 7-28508/WARNER BROS.
9.LOVE YOU DOWN	READY FOR THE WORLD MCA 52947
10.CHANGE OF HEART	CYNDI LAUPER PORTRAIT 37-06431/E.P.A.

ADULT CONTEMPORARY

TITLE	ARTIST Label & Number/Distributing Label
1. BALLERINA GIRL	LIONEL RICHIE MOTOWN 1873
2.WILL YOU STILL LOVE ME?	CHICAGO WARNER BROS. 7-28512
3. AT THIS MOMENT	BILLY VERA & THE BEATERS RHINO 74403
4.SOMEDAY	GLASS TIGER MANHATTAN 50048/EMI-AMERICA
5. SOMEWHERE OUT THERE (FROM "AN AMERICAN TAIL") LINDA RONSTADT AND JAMES INGRAM	MCA 52973
6.YOU GOT IT ALL	THE JETS MCA 52968
7. I'LL BE ALRIGHT WITHOUT YOU	JOURNEY COLUMBIA 38-06301
8.THIS IS THE TIME	BILLY JOEL COLUMBIA 38-06526
9. MANDOLIN RAIN	BRUCE HORNSBY & THE RANGE RCA 5087
10.WITHOUT YOUR LOVE	TOTO COLUMBIA 38-06570

COUNTRY

TITLE	ARTIST Label & Number/Distributing Label
1. STRAIGHT TO THE HEART	CRYSTAL GAYLE WARNER BROS. 7-28518
2. I CAN'T WIN FOR LOSIN' YOU	EARL THOMAS CONLEY RCA 5064-7
3. RIGHT HAND MAN	EDDY RAVEN RCA 5032-7
4. MORNIN' RIDE	LEE GREENWOOD MCA 52984
5. NO PLACE LIKE HOME	RANDY TRAVIS WARNER BROS. 7-28525
6. BABY'S GOT A NEW BABY	S-K-O MTM 72081/CAPITOL
7. MIDNIGHT GIRL/SUNSET TOWN SWEETHEARTS OF THE RODEO	COLUMBIA 38-06525
8.I'LL STILL BE LOVING YOU	RESTLESS HEART RCA 5065-7
9.HOW DO I TURN YOU ON	RONNIE MILSAP RCA 5033-7
10. FOREVER	THE STATLER BROTHERS MERCURY 888 219-7/POLYGRAM

HOT BLACK

TITLE	ARTIST Label & Number/Distributing Label
1.HAVE YOU EVER LOVED SOMEBODY	FREDDIE JACKSON CAPITOL 5661
2.FALLING	MELBA MOORE CAPITOL 5651
3.SLOW DOWN	LOOSE ENDS MCA 52976
4.SITUATION #9	CLUB NOUVEAU WARNER BROS. 7-28494
5.BALLERINA GIRL	LIONEL RICHIE MOTOWN 1873 MF
6.CANDY	CAMEO ATLANTA ARTISTS 888 193-7/POLYGRAM
7.SERIOUS	DONNA ALLEN 21 RECORDS 7-99497/ATLANTIC
8. YOU GOT IT ALL	THE JETS MCA 52968
9.TAKE IT TO THE LIMIT	RAY, GOODMAN & BROWN EMI-AMERICA 8365
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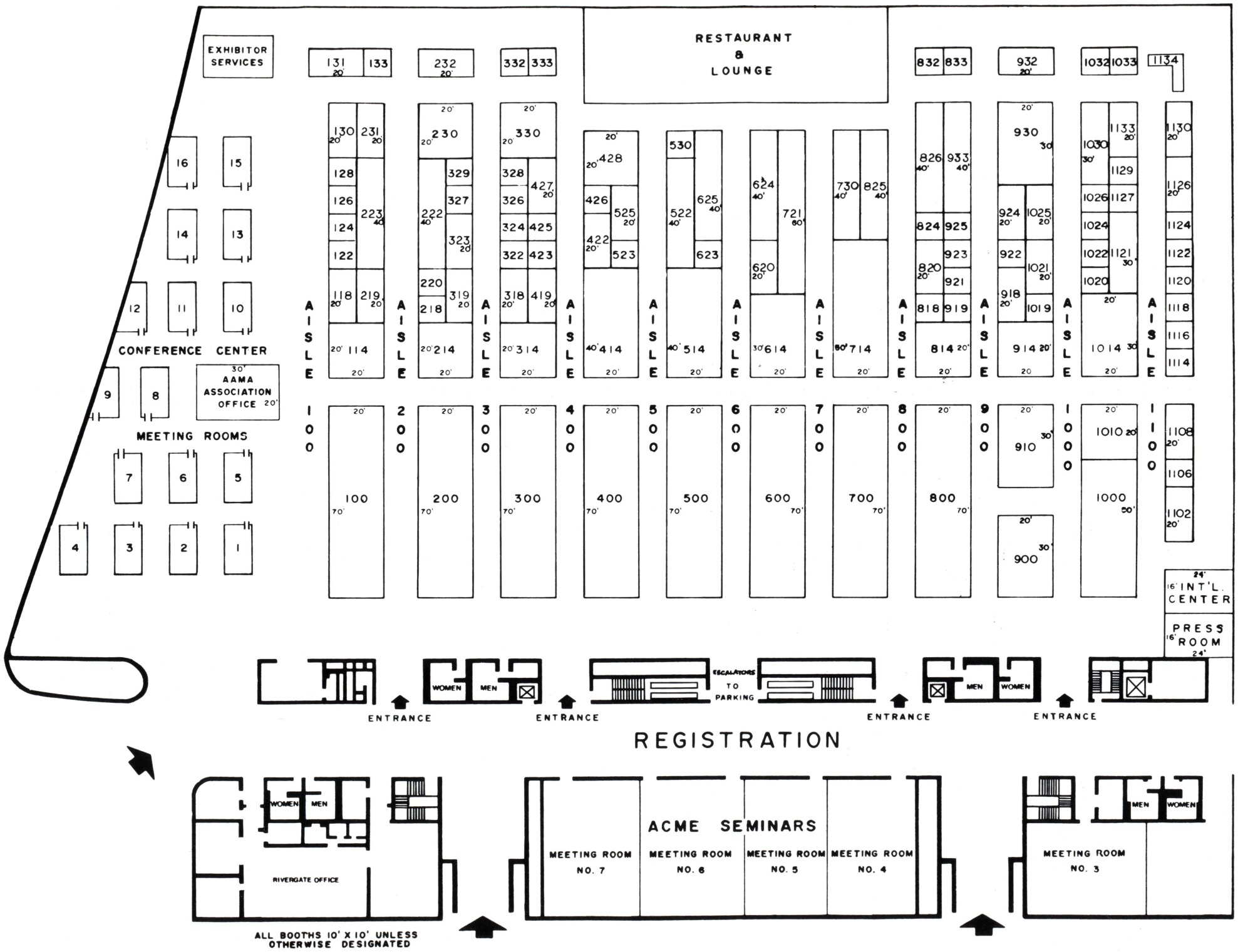
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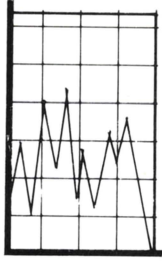

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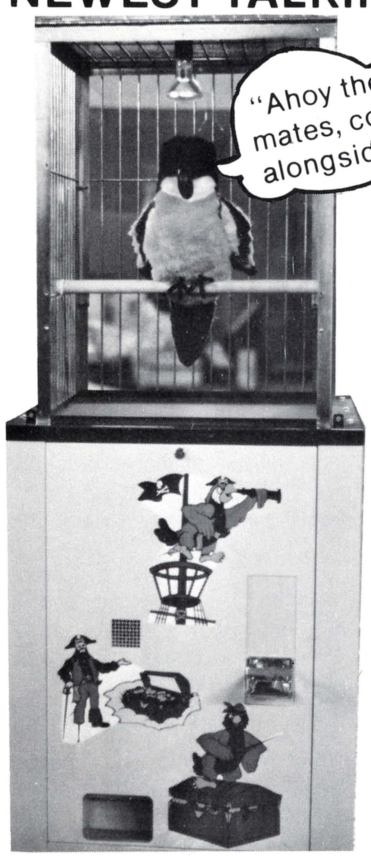

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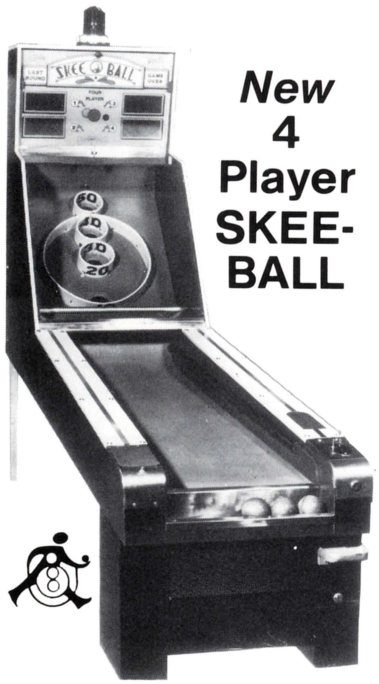

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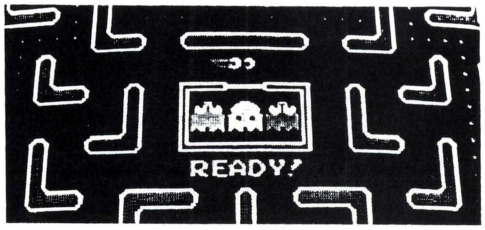

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TAX TIPS

BY IRVING L. BLACKMAN

Personal Holding Company-- A Trap for the Closely Held Corporation

Is your business incorporated? If so, how many shareholders do you have? If you say, "Five or fewer shareholders own more than 50 percent of the corporation's stock," watch out! You just passed the shareholder test and may be a personal holding company (PHC), a tax trap for the unwary. While the PHC law is very complex, this article gives you broad guidelines to follow.

Okay, you met the shareholder test; the second test is the one that really grabs you. If 60 percent of your corporation income is PHC income, it gets brutalized with a special additional 50 percent tax of the undistributed PHC income (generally, the corporation's income less the regular income tax).

PHC INCOME

PHC income includes passive income such as dividends, interest and rents. A contract for your personal services can generate PHC income. Royalties are PHC income.

Let's put some numbers to it. Suppose your corporation properly and timely paid $1,500 in tax on income of $10,000. But a couple of years down the road the corporation is examined by a revenue agent, who determines that 100 percent of the corporate income is PHC income. What happens?

CORP. TAXABLE INCOME (all PHC)	$10,000
REGULAR TAX PAID	1,500
RETAINED EARNING FOR THE YEAR	$ 8,500
ADDITIONAL PHC TAX AT 50%	$ 4,250

You must write a check to the IRS for $4,250, plus interest for two years. You didn't realize you could get caught in the PHC trap by accident.

In a recent Tax Court case (Tomerlin Trust, 87 TX No. 58 - 1986), the taxpayer corporation was owned by two shareholders who, apparently, wanted to get out of the rat race. The corporation (call it Oldco) sold auto lubricating and cleansing products and had a worldwide reputation for quality.

Oldco made a deal with Newco to give it an exclusive license to manufacture and sell products with the Oldco Trademark. Newco would pay a few cents per can of manufactured product; when the cumulative payments totaled $1 million, title to the trademark would pass to Newco. Throughout the written agreement, the parties were described as "Licensee" and "Licensor."

For a couple of years, the Oldco shareholders collected nice salaries from the funds paid to their corporate shell by Newco. Then the IRS knocked on the door and proclaimed that Oldco was a PHC because 100 percent of its income came from royalties. According to the IRS, a fat additional tax was due.

In court, the shareholders' lawyer argued that, despite the language in the agreement, Oldco had sold the trademark to Newco on an installment basis. The agreement clearly provided that Oldco could not cancel the agreement unless Newco lowered quality or failed to pay. The lawyer pointed out that these were "conditions subsequent" to the agreement to sell the trademark. In essence, the sale was completed: The burdens and benefits of ownership of the trademark passed to Newco when the agreement was signed. How would you hold?

While it was a difficult decision, the judge agreed with the reasoning of Oldco's attorney holding that the trademark was sold...thus, no PHC income. Victory for our side: Oldco escaped the PHC trap.

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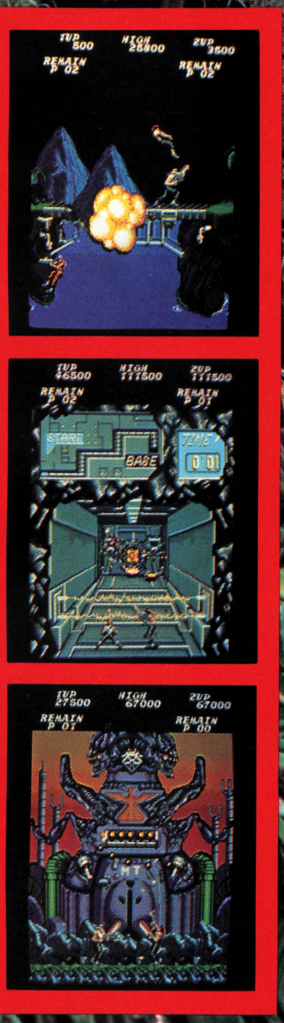

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Description:

The objective of the game is to destroy the base of Red Falcon, an organization that is plotting to conquer the earth. The player faces a multitude of challenges to complete the mission. He engages in guerrilla warfare with the soldiers of Red Falcon and battles his way through 3-D mazes and underground security systems until he reaches his ultimate challenge. To assist the player, 6 different bonus weapons are awarded for destroying small flashing sensors:

- **Machine Gun** – player can fire with machine gun force
- **Laser** – player shoots lasers instead of bullets
- **Spread Gun** – bullets spread out in several directions
- **Fireball** – player's weapon hurls fireballs
- **Barrier** – protects the player against enemy forces
- **Rapid Fire** – bullet speed increases

By annihilating the large sensor at the end of each stage, the player can advance to the next stage. There are 7 stages in the game:

1. Jungle (Horizontal Scroll)
   Player fights through the depths of the jungle, shooting the men of Red Falcon until he reaches the entrance of the enemy base. He must destroy the larger sensor to enter the base.
2. Inside Enemy Base (3-D Maze)
   Player weaves his way through an underground maze, shooting sensors at each corner and avoiding enemy attacks and the electric wave. Destroy the final sensor within a given time to reach the core of the base.
3. Core of Enemy Base (3-D Fixed)
   Destroy red and blue flashing sensors, then the giant moving eyeball.
4. Waterfall Outside the Base (Vertical Scroll)
   Player jumps upward, attacking the enemies until he reaches the entrance of the second base. The diamond shaped sensor must be blown up to gain entrance.
5. Inside the 2nd Base (3-D Maze)
   Sensors are hidden now and more difficult to destroy.
6. Core of Enemy Base (3-D Fixed)
   After he demolishes more sensors, the player must destroy 4 moving heads when they are perfectly aligned.
7. Snow Field, Hangar and the Alien's Lair (Horizontal Scroll)
   Player battles armored giants, jeeps, trucks and other threats to get to the Alien's lair. He combats larvae that are pouring out of the Alien's mouth, then must destroy the Alien's head. He advances through the Alien's body to destroy the heart. If he succeeds, the mission is accomplished.

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DON'T OVERLOOK THE EARNED INCOME CREDIT

Does your business employ unskilled labor? If so, don't overlook the earned income credit. The credit is available to low-income workers who maintain a home for at least one child. In effect, it is a reverse income tax. It can be used to reduce any tax liability due when Form 1040 is filed, or the credit is refundable to the extent that it reduces the tax below zero.

The 1986 legislation liberalizes this refundable credit. For 1987, the Maximum eligible amount is 14 percent of $5,714, or a credit of $800. The credit is phased out as earned income or adjusted gross income increases from $6,500 to $14,500.

Want to be a hero to your eligible employees? Ask them to complete and give you Form W-5. Then you can pay the credit to each employee in advance, instead of the employee waiting to get the benefit of the credit when filing his Form 1040. It costs you nothing; the amount of the credit paid to your employees is used to offset your payroll tax liability.

In short, your employees get a small "raise" on each check. The government pays it, but you'll get the credit. Go for it.

BUSINESS USE OF YOUR PERSONAL AUTO

For years, the IRS has thrown an institutional fit about taxpayers who use a personal auto partially for business. The IRS had pretty good cause. Too many taxpayers were playing and winning the auto-tax game: buying Caddies, BMWs and Mercedes sport cars and writing off most of the cost as a deductible business expense.

So the IRS screamed. Congress acted. In a bill aimed at "luxury autos," the legislators gave the IRS the authority to issue regulations to correct abuses. It acted with a vengeance, setting up requirements for contemporaneous record keeping similar to that required for substantiation of travel and entertainment expenses.

This time, business people screamed. So, Congress acted again, repealing the regulations issued by the IRS. But both Congress and the IRS knew that abuses existed and something had to be done. They horsed around with depreciation schedules and established a new category of asset called "listed property." The IRS has issued a series

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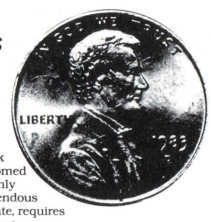

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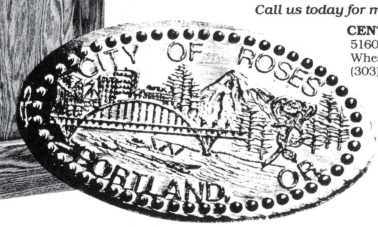

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U.S. Code Title 18, Chapter 17, Section 331: Prohibits among other things, fraudulent alteration and mutilation of coins. This statute does not, however, prohibit the mutilation of coins if done without fraudulent intent or if the mutilated coins are not used fraudulently.

of milder (but still tough to digest) regulations.

The current law is an unbelievable maze of complexity if the auto you drive is owned by the business and is used for both business and personal purposes. Hardly a day goes by without some confused client calling me with a string of questions. Is there a way to avoid the confusion? Yes! This is what you should do: Get rid of all company cars. Let the driver of the car own it. Now, when the employee uses the car for company business, the employee is responsible for all record keeping requirements. The final step is to reimburse employees for their actual auto-business-use expenses, (including depreciation).If you want to use this simplified method, have your employees use their personal auto as a condition of employment; spell it out in writing.

IRS SAYS MALES AND FEMALES ARE THE SAME

How do you tell the difference between a boy and a girl?...a woman and a man? Certainly not by looking at the new IRS annuity valuation tables. Here's the story.

Suppose you contribute to the cost of an annuity you will start collecting some time in the future. Logic dictates that you should be able to recover the amount of your contributions--tax-free (the excess being taxable income). The tax law tries to accomplish just that by treating a portion of each annuity payment as a tax-free return of capital. It's easy to determine the tax-free amount if you will collect those annuity payments for a fixed number of years.

But what happens if you will collect those payments for as long as you live? How long will you be around to cash your annuity checks? Never fear, the IRS has a set of tables, appropriatelly called the life expectancy table, that solves this little problem for you. Just look opposite your age in the table, and you will know exactly how many years you have left. The IRS uses that number of years for your tax-free annuity computation.

A quick quiz: On average, who lives longer, women or men?...women, everyone knows. The old IRS life expectancy tables told it like it was; there were two separate tables (his and hers) to reflect this statistical truth. Well, all that true-to-life stuff has been dumped. The brand new tables are no longer (heaven forbid) sex-biased.

What does this mean in dollars and cents (and taxes)? The results are both bad and good, depending on whose ox is being gored.

Bad news: The longer life span for a male (per the tables) means that, on average, you won't live long enough to recover your tax-free return of capital. The new law attempts to deal with this inequity by allowing you a deduction on your final tax return (for the year of death) for the unrecovered portion of your contribution. Big deal, if you have little or no income, the deduction is worthless. Chances are you will get ripped off.

Good news: Let's take a look at the mischief that can be caused by the same tables when you don't make any contribution toward the annuity you will receive. If you are a female and the boss must pay you an annuity at retirement (say, from a pension or profit sharing plan), you will get a bigger check. (You must collect a given sum of money over a shorter time frame.) This time, you are ahead: collecting more checks over your real longer-life expectancy than reflected in the tables. The boss gets ripped off.

I'd like to hear from my readers on this issue. Write to me at 300 South Riveside Plaza, Chicago, Ill. 60606.

PLAY METER ASKS:

WHAT IS THE CURRENT STATE OF THE INDUSTRY?

"

We are still in the process of getting video games out of the 7-11s. More people are starting to come back to the arcades. The merchandisers and skeeball redemption centers are becoming family oriented which can only help the industry. The price of new video games is too high and needs to be lower for dedicated locations (i.e. amusement parks, Six Flags, etc.).

"

TEXAS

PLAY METER ASKS:

WHAT IS THE CURRENT STATE OF THE INDUSTRY?

"

The industry is finally getting back to the people who care. There are still some greedy people who would rather steal than work hard. The people should expose these crooks whether they are manufacturers, distributors, or operators.

"

ALABAMA

The Amusement & Music Operators Association strongly believes that continuing education is a key to success for coin-operators in the amusement & music industry. Since 1983, AMOA member

Continuing Education = Succes$!

operators have had the opportunity to utilize continuing education to enhance their business skills through the AMOA-Notre Dame Executive Development Program at Notre Dame's campus in South Bend, Ind.

Designed specifically for operators,

the program is comprised of five (5) two and one-half day sessions. Sessions are held each spring and fall. Conducted by a leading Notre Dame educator who understands the needs of operators and patterned — in part — after Notre Dame's executive MBA program, sessions address these diverse operator topics... and much more:

- Accounting
- Budgeting
- Finance
- Human Resource Management
- Law
- Marketing
- Strategic Planning
- Taxation

There also are group assignments where participating operators are given a specific homework "project" to complete during the session. Better yet, each session gives operators an opportunity to learn in a campus environment *and* exchange ideas with fellow operators — a unique learning experience in itself!

Feedback from operators who have successfully completed all — or just a few — of the five sessions has been nothing short of phenomenal! In fact, all attest that they reap many benefits — monetarily and in business "smarts" — when applying what they've learned back home. Those operators successfully completing all five sessions also receive AMOA-Notre Dame continuing education certification.

The AMOA-Notre Dame Executive Development Program is one very important way that AMOA is helping members improve their business skills through one of the greatest training tools ever — continuing education.

AMOA: Working for You!

For more information on the AMOA-Notre Dame Executive Development Program — or AMOA membership, programs and services — call or write today!

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Chicago, IL 60601
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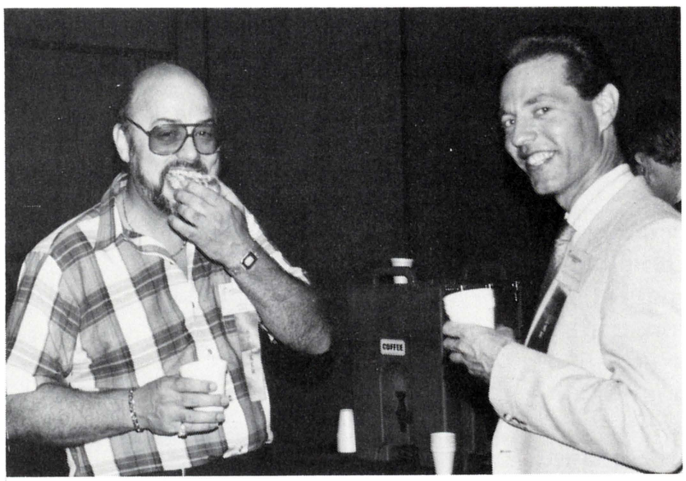
312/565-4602

OPERATOR QUESTIONS GET ANSWERED

by Frank "The Crank" Seninsky



Frank and Bill Cravens (left) will team for the ACME seminar on protecting locations. Here they exchange deal-sweetening strategies.

In a recent operator poll conducted by Play Meter, a majority of operators said that they would like to see more service tips and game recommendations in future 'Frank's Cranks' columns. Knowing which games and kits are the best buys is easy for me because we (Alpha-Omega Amusements) test almost every game that comes out and our collection information is more current than any equipment poll. Coming up with service tips every month, however, is quite difficult.

A solution to this dilemma arrived in the mail one day from my good operator friend, Bill Johnston of Buffalo, N.Y. Bill scribbled down a few technical questions that he wanted answered. Since it's easier for operators to ASK questions, this seemed like a practical method pointing me in a direction to search out solutions to game problems each month. It would be much appreciated if readers would send post cards with specific problems. I will supply a solution in the next column.

Running Alpha-Omega's national board repair service helps me stay on top of current operator problems. Some operators have been interested enough to attach a note with their bad boards, requesting us to tell them exactly what went wrong in each case, why we think it happened, and how they should go about fixing one with a similar problem. Here are some of the questions I have received recently:

Q: Why does *Star Force* by Tecmo work better with a microswitch joystick than a leaf switch joystick? Some games seem to have trouble with standard leaf switches. Is it the amperage load across the switch?

A: Some games do seem to work better with a microswitch joystick, simply because leaf switches oxidize more rapidly because they are not encased (protected) but are open to moisture and dust in the air. Oxidation causes a build-up in electrical resistance. Leaf switches also require proper alignment and contact (gap) spacing. The more critical joystick movement is to a particular games' play, the more important alignment, spacing, and contact cleaning becomes.

Q: Wico engineers have indicated that leaf switches outlast microswitches. What's your preference and experience?

A: I really have no preference since each type has its advantages and disadvantages. It is logical that a leaf switch will outlast a microswitch (mechanically speaking) simply because there is more that can go wrong with a microswitch since it has more parts. The actual switch leafs in both types are manufactured exactly the same. If you happen to talk to an electrical engineer at Wico, I would assume that he would choose a microswitch over a leaf switch. The encased microswitch contacts will remain aligned, stay cleaner, and won't oxidize nearly as much as a leaf switch.

Q: *Mr. Do!* played better on my route with a 8-way joystick instead of its 4-way joystick. I've also noticed a difference in *Ghosts N' Goblins*. Is it better with an 8-way or a 4-way joystick?

A: On some games you can actually gross more money by replacing the 4-way joystick with an 8-way one, but this is the exception rather than the rule. The turns will become much smoother and the player will feel more in control. However, on most games, changing the joystick type won't have any effect on game play. To further complicate matters, putting an 8-way joystick on some 4-way games will screw up the input lines so the game can't be played. Each games' processor reads player input in its own special sequence and at its own rate (frequency). The easiest way to determine which games can be improved, is by trial and error. To tell you the truth, I'm sure that we have several games out in the field where an 8-way joystick was put on by mistake. I sure hope that no one puts a 4-way on a game that should have an 8-way.

WHAT GAMES AND KITS ARE "HOT"

The games that are doing great on our route now (2/29/87) are *Out Run*, *720 Degrees*, *Victory Road*, *Pin Bot*, and these four kits: *World Series*, *Double Dribble*, *Side Arms*, and *Arkanoid*. I've discussed all of the above before except *Double Dribble* and *Side Arms*. I would recommend your taking a good look at these two kits before making your buying decisions.

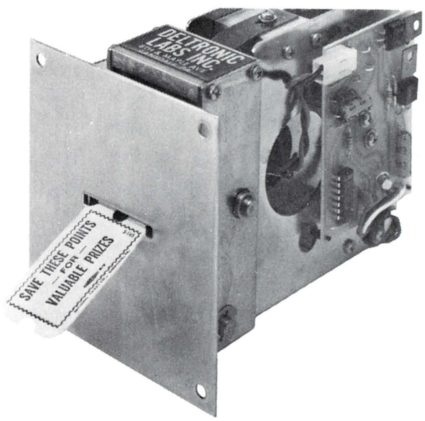
ACME SEMINARS

I'm honored that I will be taking part in this year's ACME Show. I'm giving a session on Route Profitability, which was well received at the state association trade shows in Pennsylvania, Ohio, New York, and Wisconsin and has been updated for the ACME session. I'm also doing the session entitled Protecting Locations with Agreements/Using Contracts as Sales Tools (How to sweeten your deal) with Capcom's Bill Cravens. It looks to be one of the best you'll ever go to. As you can see from the picture, when Bill Cravens and I get together, you can "have your cake and eat it too." That is if Bill doesn't grab it all! As an operator, you can be assured that I won't let a manufacturer keep the "icing" on any deal.

Remember, send those questions on a post card to me at Alpha-Omega Amusements & Sales, 6 Sutton Place, Edison, NJ 08817 (201) 287-4990. Have a good ACME Show and as always.....keep cranking!

ACME 87
MARCH 20, 21, 22 • NEW ORLEANS

THE TICKET DISPENSER —WITH EXPERIENCE



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ACME 87
MARCH 20, 21, 22 • NEW ORLEANS

PLAYERS' PICKS

ACME '87...A LOOK BACK, A LOOK AHEAD

BY STEVE HARRIS AND THE U.S. NATIONAL VIDEO GAME TEAM

It seems like yesterday that we were in Chicago, celebrating the festivities and friendships that are part of the AMOA Expo. And, as the U.S. National Video Game Team joins thousands of other operators and distributors for the second annual American Coin Machine Expo, I've found myself re-examining the team's AMOA "Pick-Hits" that have finally discovered new homes in the local arcade.

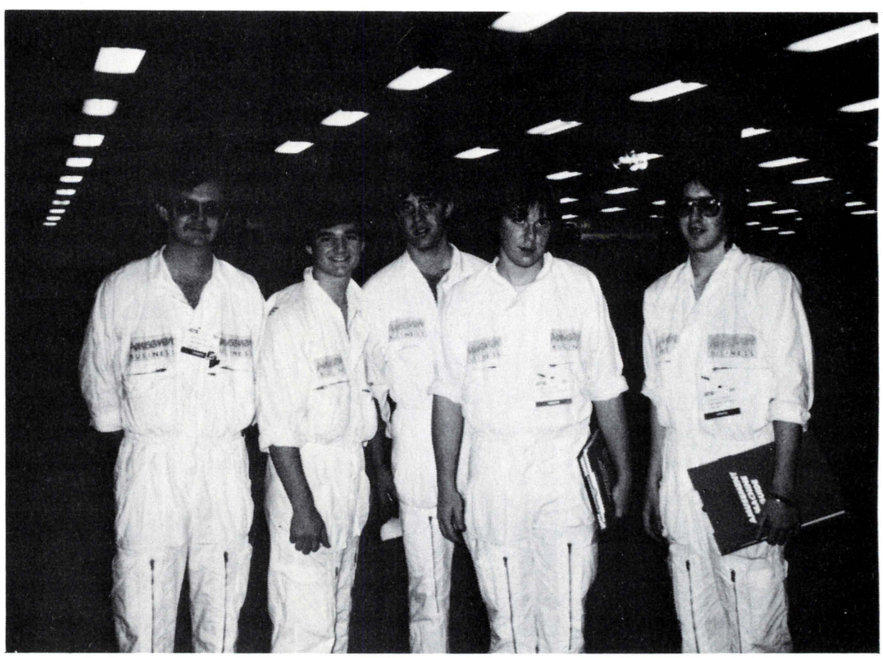
With the industry on its upswing, it would have been very difficult to find a finer selection of new product than that on display at AMOA '86. Besides boasting a wide array of crane and novelty equipment, the AMOA convention featured one of the richest assortments of video and pin products to be seen in some time. Unlike previous expos, it was difficult to uncover a truly bad machine.

Not only were the goods indeed good, but attendance was high and the general mood of the show nothing less than exhilarating. AMOA '86 was a high point for the entire industry, benefiting everyone from operators to manufacturers.

The U.S. National Video Game Team Pick Hits

During AMOA '86, members of the U.S. National Video Game Team evaluated the new video games and pinball machines on display. At the conclusion of the show, the U.S. National Video Game Team made presentations to a number of manufacturers whose equipment displayed superior design. Awards were given on the basis of visual and audio enhancements, as well as to the best and most innovative games of the show.

However, one problem that we often encounter when evaluating new game releases at national and state conventions is the often deceiving first impression. A simple example: a manufacturer may debut a new title that boasts an exciting innovation or play theme, but lackluster play mechanics. While they often promise additional interaction or game play to sweeten the package at the show, programming restraints can sometimes prevent designers from realizing their



Look for the distinctive white uniform of a U.S. National Video Team member for a player's opinion.

best ideas.

Beyond such deciding factors, games are always more fun to play for free. While trying to keep a clear perspective on every aspect that affects a machine's potential income, we must occasionally fight back our players' instincts and avoid the presentation of awards to games that may play well, but fail to provide the average operator a generous ROI. Machines set for 50-cent play or higher may find trouble attracting gamers at local amusement centers, a point to be considered.

So, in this special edition of "Players Picks", we'll take one last look back at the top games of AMOA '86 while looking ahead to the new games guaranteed to spark similar excitement at ACME '87. And, from the sneak peeks we've received, the lineup at ACME should be every bit as good and the atmosphere every bit as inviting as AMOA in November.

Sega's *Out Run*

(Recipient of Best Visual Enhancement, Best Audio Enhancement, and Best Game of Show Awards)

This perennial race game was the definitive show-stopper, attracting a broad audience of operators and distributors with its slick visual animation and intense game play. Offered in both simulator and upright packages, *Out Run* was described by many as possibly the best game of all time.

Not surprisingly, when this sharp-looking unit made its initial appearance in simulator form at our local arcade, a crowd of players immediately lined up to play. Reservations about the double (and in some places triple) playing price (50- or 75-cent play) were quickly dispelled as players immersed themselves in the action of this exciting driving contest.

Cinematronics' *Danger Zone*

(Recipient of Most Innovative Game of Show Award)

"Necessity is the mother of invention," is the phrase that comes to mind with this game. When the video game concept was new, players were eager to inspect each release, regardless of its theme or play value. Those, of course, were the boom days, when a video game was an attraction in itself.

But, as the entertainment appeal of the games began to subside (due to the overproduction of lackluster games which should never have been released in the first place), manufacturers wisely sought out new technologies with which to merge existing videos. In theory, this would improve the overall image of the games and return collections to their previous state. Unfortunately, the net result was a series of flash-in-the-pan successes which did little more than breed a subsequent line of failures (witness the laser disc games and the simulator ride-on machines).

At the AMOA convention, however, Cinematronics unleashed a new type of interactive video in the form of *Danger Zone*, a machine which may not have its imitators, but will definitely have its admirers.

Danger Zone brings the deadly realism of manning an anti-aircraft cannon against wave after wave of invading war machines. At the expo, *Danger Zone* earned center stage in the Cinematronics booth solely on the basis of its highly inventive and unusual cabinet design. The slightly superficial game play (shoot...shoot...shoot) was to be expanded to accommodate additional promised attack waves.

Well, *Danger Zone* has lived up to its promises in a positive and profitable way. Although some important software changes failed to appear in the final version, players don't seem to care about the lack of complexity. Anyone seeking a challenging, physical contest won't be disappointed by *Danger Zone*. This one-of-a-kind machine delivers high-intensity action that is second to none.

Danger Zone not only stands on its own, it also provides an attraction and atmosphere that compliments the entire location. Now let's all hope that we see a low-priced follow-up conversion for this imaginative piece of hardware. Do I hear *Super Tailgunner*?

Bally Midway's *Strange Science*

(Recipient of the Best Pinball Game Award)

Without a doubt, pinball made its strongest showing in the post video boom era during the AMOA. All the majors had sterling product, including Premier with *Gold Wings* and Williams with *Pin Bot*. However, show attendees were treated to a special surprise in the guise of Bally Midway's *Strange Science*.

Although the voting was extremely close, *Strange Science* edged out its competition with a number of features and a unique play theme that complimented the rest of the package. Five ball multi-ball, power savers, and a host of other attractions kept team members entertained throughout the show.

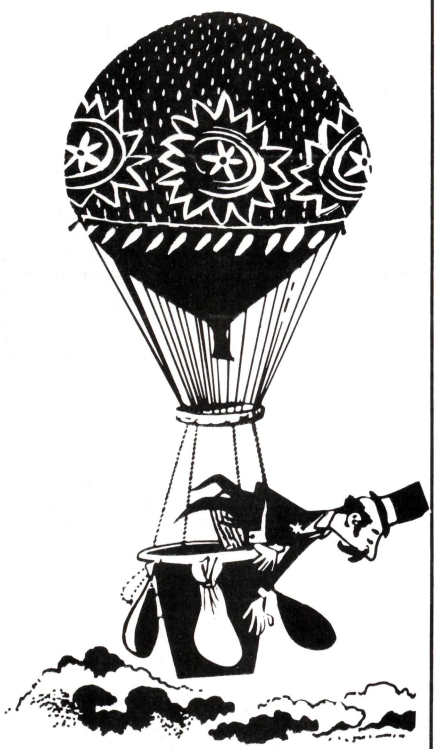
Unfortunately, many operators have shyed away from this game in favor of the equally impressive *Pin Bot* (though, there is no denying the excellent returns it has generated.)

It's a shame that *Strange Science* didn't get the wide-spread release it deserved after the show or achieve operator acceptance. However, it is still considered a fast-action tour-de-force by players everywhere.

Romstar's *Arkanoid*

(Recipient of Best Conversion Kit At Show Award)

FROM
ANY
VIEWPOINT
. . . . .



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The success of this game was obvious even before the AMOA. Its simple theme and uncomplicated controls, combined with adequate graphics and exceptional game play appeals to both male and female players of all ages.

Simplicity is the key word in describing this undeniable hit. *Arkanoid* features an old-fashioned theme with modern graphics and sound effects. This wall-bashing classic is destined to earn steadily for some time to come, much like classics, *Galaga* and *Ms. Pac-Man.*

I didn't notice

AMOA '86 offered many opportunities for viewing a wide selection of equipment. With all the booths and all the games however, the U.S. National Video Game Team found that some games slipped by unnoticed. And while these games won't be unseating *Out Run* as best game of the show, they do possess positive attributes which could find players reaching back into their pockets for more quarters.

Konami's *Life Force*

Nothing spectacular, but a solid effort nonetheless. Great animation mixed with subtle vocal embellishments carry the player through an adventure in a alien life form. Pure shoot-em-up fun that boasts a variety of strategies while affording a number of playing environments.

Nintendo's *Gradius*

Like Sente's SAC system, the Nintendo VS. Paks were not known for their bullets and battles. *VS. Gradius* fills that void with a terrific rendition of the Konami sleeper, *Nemesis.* As a dedicated game, this title was a good game, providing an ever-changing adventure that allows the players to actually customize their vehicles. But, as a low-priced VS. Pak, *Gradius* is a must-buy for your clients that prefer explosion over cuteness.

Tradewest's *Victory Road*

While it didn't make an appearance on the floor, Tradewest's thrilling follow-up to their premier success, *Ikari Warriors,* continues the adventure of two intrepid warriors in search of justice with their rifles. Although the basic mechanics of play don't differ much from its predecessor, *Victory Road* does blend enough additional incentives into the original game to warrant a second trip to *Ikari.*

Bally/Sente's *Street Football*

Definitely a regional game, but a good addition to the SAC library. *Street Football* is for competitive players who like head-to-head action and a lot of blisters.

To the Future...

What lies ahead at ACME convention (or at least what we've been able to pry from the secretive game companies) is nothing short of perfection. In addition to the grand exhibits and wide selection of new game releases just waiting to be previewed, there will be instructional seminars and gala get-togethers on behalf of a number of special achievements. These presentations will definitely add flavor to what will be a show worth remembering.

Among the games that are going to be introduced at the ACME are numerous sequels and interactive titles determined to cash in on familiar names or unique themes. And while the manufacturers will undoubtedly have a few surprises up their sleeves, several games sound especially promising.

Bally Midway and Bally Sente, fresh off a string of hit games, will most definitely have something for everyone, including two new videos and a trendy new pin. *Moon Quake,* a conversion for Sente's SAC I

System, sounds like another intense winner for its economical cabinet. Expect some high praise from U.S. National Video Game Team members and operators alike on this one.

Also from Bally comes *Spy Hunter* II, a long overdue sequel to an unusually under-rated video released back in 1983. The new adventure/driving contest boasts a larger 25-inch monitor and simultaneous two player interactivity. A definite possibility for Best Game of Show honors.

Rounding out the offerings from Chicago's biggest is *Hardbody*, a new pin with all the excitement of professional body building on a multi-level playfield. Following the philosophies of Bally's TNT series, *Hardbody* should have visitors thoroughly involved.

Besides the promising trio from Bally comes another sequel to pump additional life into a current favorite, *Arkanoid*. Romstar's *Tournament Arkanoid* continues the tradition of the original brick-bashing *Arkanoid* by bringing additional brick formations and new customizing features to eager players everywhere.

The always reliable Capcom will have several new games on the floor for your approval. These include *Avengers*, a martial arts contest that is said to be very different from the mega-hits of a year ago, expanding on those rather limited themes. Customizing features increase the strategy and playability of this new game.

Capcom's *Bionic Commando*, a possible follow-up to *Commando* sounds interesting!

If the AMOA was any indication, 1987 should be the year of the modern pinball machine. Don't pass up your chance to test the latest in pins scheduled to appear at the show. These include Premier's highly touted *Monte Carlo* and Williams' *Millionaire*. With nothing but success coming from both of these companies, it'll be interesting to see what type of a showing pinball makes.

Look for a number of new game cartridges for the reigning systems. Remember, as the libraries continue to grow, your player base will increase as well. Take advantage of the low system prices and take a second look at any systems you don't have.

ACME '87 will be an ideal place to talk business; check out new goods, and have fun with old friends. Don't let this once-a-year opportunity slip by without first examining all the machines on display. And, if you have any questions or if you can't decide which games deserve further attention, stop one of the U.S National Video Team members in white and feel free to ask. Remember, we're players and we know what players enjoy. We may not know exactly what's right for your particular location, but I'll bet we can send you in the right direction! Most of all, learn from the ACME experience. After all, while you're there it's your show!

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Rolling Thunder

Atari Games heightens intrigue and heroism in its newest attraction, *Rolling Thunder.*

Rolling Thunder is a spy-themed game where the player controls the hero, a 007-style character known by the code name Albatross.

The year is 1960 in New York City and the elusive Maboo, leader of a secret society called Geldra, is plotting to conquer the world. Leila, an agent of the Rolling Thunder undercover arm of the secret police organization, was captured while on special assignment in Maboo's underground headquarters. Top agent Albatross is the only man who can save Leila and complete her mission.

Game play starts at the base of the heavily guarded enemy headquarters. Using a four-position joystick and jump and shoot buttons, the player makes his way to the end of each area by evading or destroying enemy patrols.

Limited ammunition is given at the start of each area and players must collect additional ammo by entering doors marked "bullets". If the player enters a door marked "arms" he will receive a more powerful machine gun. By using the jump button, the player can strategically evade or set-up enemy attacks.

Rolling Thunder is engineered and designed by Namco, Ltd. It is the first game that Atari has licensed and manufactured since *Pole Position II.*

For more details on this new video, write Atari Games Corp., 675 Sycamore Drive, Milpitas, CA 95035, or call (408) 434-3748.

Millionaire

Williams' newest pin, *Millionaire,* adds a new dimension to pinball with the Wheel of Riches feature, a roulette-type mechanism that awards spectacular winnings like cash, extra ball, special, automatic multi-ball and a big payoff.

Everyone dreams of becoming a millionaire and pinball enthusiasts can now reach that goal in *Millionaire's* game play. Lock up two balls during multi-ball play for ruby, emerald and diamond payoffs. Make m-o-n-e-y to open the left gate; make b-a-n-k to open the right gate and light silver and gold. Collect the gold and activate lights for cash; make m-o-n-e-y and gold to light extra ball.

There's also a moving ball guide that, when timed correctly, sends a player through a sparkling gold mine.

For more details, write Williams Electronics Games, Inc., 3401 N. California Ave., Chicago, IL 60618, or call (312) 267-2240.

Lock-On, Karnov and Kid Niki

Data East introduces a trio of new videos with *Lock-On,* an upright with detachable seat; *Karnov,* a search-for-riches mission; and *Kid Niki,* a sword fighting-themed horizontal generic upright.

Lock-On engages players in a realistic aerial dogfight. Piloting a Tatsumi jet fighter, players must destroy enemy planes with machine gun fire and *Lock-On* missiles while

avoiding the enemy's blue and red missile attacks.

Available as an upright model or sit-down with detachable seat, the game is licensed from Tatsumi, maker of *Speed Buggy*.

In *Karnov*, an affordable upright, the player becomes the hero *Karnov*, a fire-breathing Russian who searches for the Lost Treasure of Babylon. He runs, jumps, climbs, swims and flies through nine intense and challenging levels of game play.

Among the enemies out to stop him are gigantic dinosaurs, vultures, bats and flying demons. Options such as boomerangs and bombs are strategically used to destroy the major enemies while other options such as wings for flying, boots for running faster and an aqua mask for increased swimming speed can be collected along the way.

More battles are in store in *Kid Niki*, a video that follows the path of the main character, a young swordsman in search of his spike-haired girlfriend, Princess Margo. He must conquer a series of enemies from Spike and Death Breath to the Stone Wizard. The punk ninja warrior must also collect intense weapons to assist him in his quest.

Kid Niki is a horizontal generic kit or quick and easy plug-in for *Kung Fu Master*. The game is licensed from Irem, developer of *Kung Fu Master*.

For more information, write Data East USA, Inc. 470 Needles Drive, San Jose, CA 95112, or call (408) 286-7074.

Hardbody

Bally Midway introduces the strategies of bodybuilding to the automated, electronic playfield of pinball in *Hardbody*, its newest pin that features a backglass graced by images of Rachel McLish.

Motivated by viewing four different poses by McLish, two-time winner of the prestigious Ms. Olympia women's bodybuilding competition, players attempt to exercise specific parts of the body.

There are four workout stations: arms/shoulders, back/chest, legs and abdomen. When players complete one set of each station they qualify to be one step closer to tournament victory.

Muscle fitness and health are respected and valued in the 80's and *Hardbody* provides a vicarious "trip to the club" for players. Bally again translates interactive sports into electronic games for maximum appeal.

For more information, write Bally Midway Manufacturing Co., 10601 W. Belmont Ave., Franklin Park, IL 60131, or call (312) 451-9200.

Pay telephones

Public Pay Phone, Inc. introduces the *Deluxe Western Electric* and *GTE* model telephones that are hearing-aid compatible and offer owner-programmable options.

These models feature an easily understood digital voice, rate tables to accommodate all local tariff requirements and battery backed RAM to store options, total, free phone numbers, and other site specific variables.

A complete remote auditing capability enables the owner to poll each unit to determine the amount of cash in the cash box plus obtain an accounting of local, long distance and O+ calls. The

high-security cabinet provides protection from vandalism and theft. Emergency calls are coin-free.

For more efficient collections, the units may be programmed to automatically report the amount of coins in the coin box when it reaches a predetermined level. An auto-dialer can be included to capture advertising revenue from cab companies and other services.

For further details, write Public Pay Phone, Inc., 3800 Highland Ave., Suite 300, Manhattan Beach, CA 90266, or call (213) 546-7668. In California call 800/342-5330.

Weight Check

Weight Check, Inc. has developed the latest in computerized weighing scales, the *Weight Check 2000*, of special interest to health, diet and fitness conscious Americans.

Weight Check 2000 offers three programs: weight and calorie analysis for 25 cents each play; plus diet recommendations for an additional 50 cents.

The weight analysis prints out the customer's exact weight, ideal weight and the amount the person is over or under weight (based on Metropolitan Life Insurance Company's standard chart for age, height and body build).

The calorie analysis analyses the total number of calories needed to maintain current weight as well as the amount that would result in losing one pound per week. It also supplies the amount of exercise needed in walking, jogging, etc. to burn up the required number of calories per day and gives information on low-calorie foods.

For an additional 50 cents *Weight Check 2000* recommends a choice of three diets: high fiber, fruit or high protein. A leasing program is available for established operators.

For more details, write Weight Check, Inc., 1350 W. Shure Drive, Arlington Heights, IL 60004, or call (312) 253-2981.

Astro Rhythm

Compuvend, Inc. adds *Astro Rhythm* to its line of countertop equipment. It gives a daily rhythm forecast for health, luck, sex, finance and romance plus dispenses a lucky lotto number.

Compuvend has developed customized software that will conform to each state's format. When the lucky number lights up on the *Astro Rhythm* panel, it appears in a sequence that matches that state's lottery system.

Astro Rhythm can be a countertop unit or placed on a pedestal base alone or in conjunction with other Compuvend units. Suggested locations are restaurants and at the point of sale for actual state lottery tickets.

For more information, write Compuvend Enterprises, Inc. 9145 Glenoaks Blvd., Sun Valley, CA 91352, or call (818) 504-0684.

Hyper Dyne Side Arms

Romstar's newest conversion kit is *Hyper Dyne Side Arms* a two-player horizontal game with space combat theme.

Each player becomes a space soldier who must destroy his enemies with weapons from five different systems at his

disposal. An onscreen status line shows which weapons are available. Play involves a joystick, fire button, weapons selection button and power button.

A special feature is the ability of two players to combine into one onscreen to achieve greater power. This is possible when a certain symbol appears on the screen. Action proceeds through 12 screens.

The kit comes complete with instruction manual, wiring harness, PCB, side graphics, bezel and monitor overlay, plexiglas for control panel labels, poster, sticker decals, buttons, switches and joystick. The game is licensed from Capcom USA.

For more information, write Romstar, Inc., 3043 Kashiwa St., Torrance, CA 90505, or call (213) 539-2744.

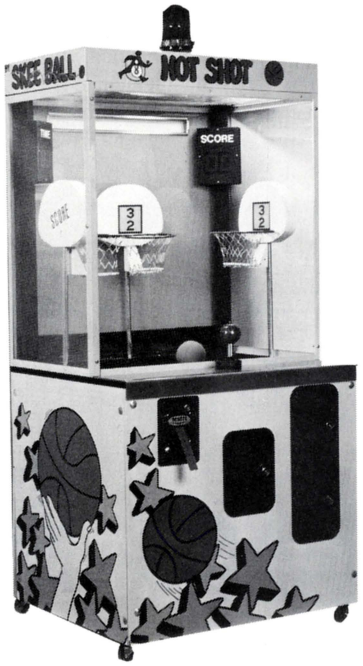
Hot Shot

Skee-Ball introduces micro-basketball with it's latest coin-op entry, *Hot Shot.*

The game's dimensions of 36 inches wide, 30 inches deep and 76 inches high make it appropriate for many different locations. The coin receptacle adjusts from 25 cents to $1 per game.

Hot Shot is constructed of reinforced impact-resistant Lexan. Features include solid-state digital-controlled scoreboard, optional ticket dispenser and one year warranty.

Game play involves shooting the ball into the baskets with blasts of air. An automatic bonus point randomly rotates from basket to basket, allowing skillful players to score a three-pointer. Game play is adjustable from 60 to 90 seconds.



For more details, write Skee-Ball, Inc., 8th & Maple Streets, Lansdale, PA 19446, or call (215) 362-0300.

Top Secret

Exidy introduces *Top Secret*, a spy-themed video available in sit-down version and standard upright model conversion kit that converts any Exidy shooting game.

In *Top Secret* players travel through enemy territory to gather reconnaissance intelligence, find the U.S. base and return safely. They must avoid or destroy hostile resistance encountered along the way.

The Pentagon's latest device, the high-tech twin turbo charged VLK car, is at their service and filled with the C. I.A.'s most advanced weapons system. Action buttons activate an electromagnetic force field, laser beams with target lock, 50-caliber machine guns, oil slicks, heat seeking ground-to-ground and ground-to-air missiles, turbo boost, dual fireballs and a top secret "intelligent" weapon.

For more information, write Exidy, Inc. 42680 Christy St., Fremont, CA 94538, or call (415) 490-7660.

Video Gram

Video Gram, Inc. has developed a personal video production studio with its newest product, *Video Gram*, a token-operated booth where customers can produce their own video tapes.

The popularity of home video units increases the desire for personalized tapes to send to loved ones in the armed services, grandparents who live far away, students, for holiday

greetings, and video identification for children.

Video Gram is an automatic booth. Customers insert a tape and token and film their video using zoom and tilt controls. Results are viewed on a nine-inch color monitor. If they become stumped on what to say, the same text display monitor that gave the initial instructions provides several screens of memory joggers.

Operation of the booth merely requires over-the-counter sales of the tape/token combination. The outside of the booth features a 13-inch color monitor that provides advertisement and start-up directions. The display continuously cycles between a 30-second video commercial and up to eight text screens. Here the "how and why" of the booth are demonstrated and potential customers are directed to the sales counter.

The unit measures four feet by eight feet and is seven feet high. It breaks down to fit through standard doorway openings.

For more details, write Video Gram, Inc., 10096 Soquel Drive, Aptos, CA 95003, or call (408) 688-5835.

We goofed!

The new products section of our January issue listed an incorrect 800 number for Altec Manufacturing, Inc., maker of *Ye Olde Gift Shoppe* single upright crane. The correct number is 800/423-8779. We regret the error.

In the Buyer's Guide Index of the same issue, specialty section, Centek Inc.'s zip code was off one digit. When writing to Centek, maker of *The Pressed Penny Souvenir*, use zip code 80033. We're sorry for the typo.

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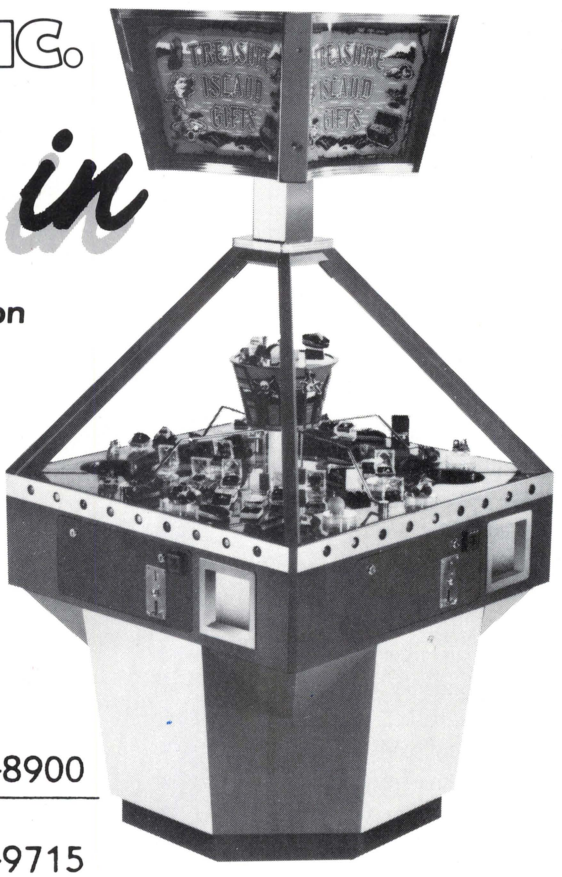

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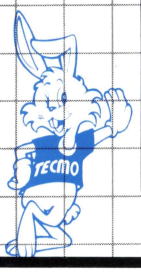

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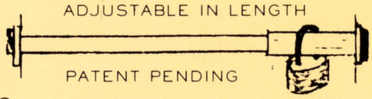

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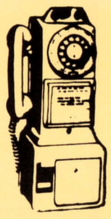

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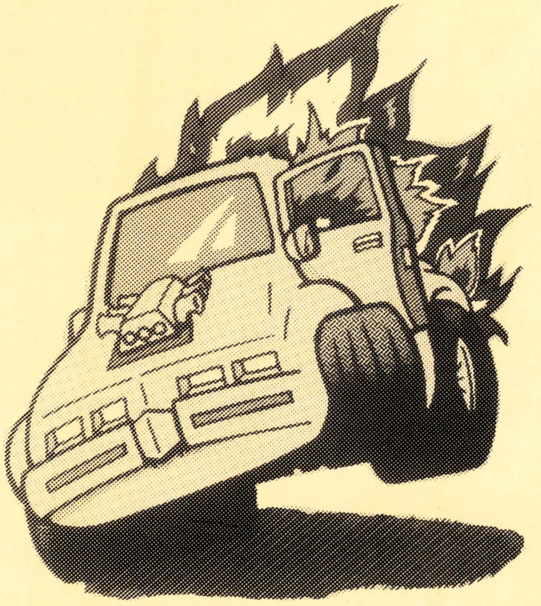

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APRIL 11
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JUNE 6
Erlanger, KY
(location same as March 14)

MARCH 14
Erlanger, KY (south of Cincy.)
Best Western Airport Inn-Convention Center
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APRIL 25
Springfield, IL
State Fairgrounds
Illinois Building
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AUCTIONEER: Bill Hughes
ADVERTISING MANAGER: Ric Stephan

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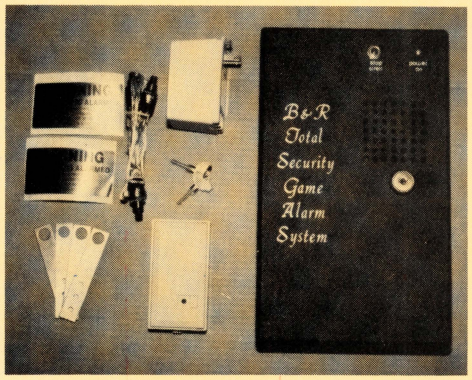

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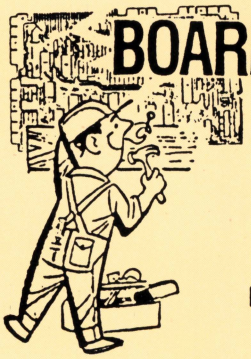

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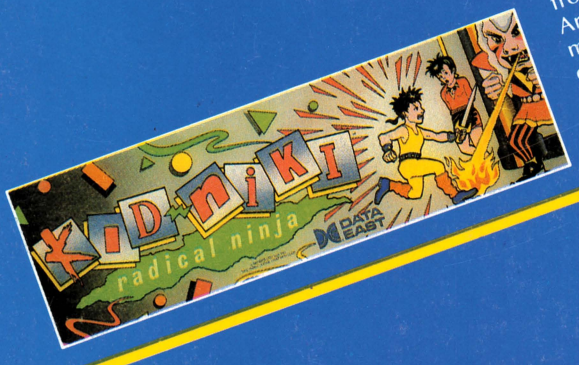

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